

LETTERS

ON

SEVERAL SUBJECTS,

BY

SIR THOMAS FITZOSBORNE.

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FITZOSBORNE'S LETTERS.

XLIX. TO PALAMEDES.

Aug. 2, 1734.

CEREMONY is never more unwelcome, than at that season in which you will, probably, have the greatest share of it ; and, as I should be extremely unwilling to add to the number of those, who, in pure good manners, may interrupt your enjoyments, I choose to give you my congratulations a little prematurely. After the happy office shall be completed, your moments will be too valuable to be laid out in forms ; and it would be paying a compliment with a very ill grace, to draw off your eyes from the highest beauty, though it were to turn them on the most exquisite wit. I hope, however, you will give me timely notice of your wedding day, that I may be prepared with my epithalamium. I have already laid in half a dozen deities extremely proper for the occasion, and have even made some progress in my first simile. But I am somewhat at a loss how to proceed, not being able to determine whether your future bride is most like Venus or Hebe. That she resembles both, is universally agreed, I find, by those who have seen her. But it would be offending, you know, against all the rules of poetical justice, if I should only say she is

as handsome as she is young, when, after all, perhaps, the truth may be, that she has even more beauty than youth. In the mean while, I am turning over all the tender compliments that love has inspired, from the Lesbia of Catullus to the Chloe of Prior, and hope to gather such a collection of flowers as may not be unworthy of entering into a garland composed for your Stella. But, before you introduce me as a poet, let me be recommended to her by a much better title, and assure her that I am yours, &c.

L. TO EUPHRONIUS.

I AM much inclined to join with you in thinking that the Romans had no peculiar word in their language which answers precisely to what we call *good sense* in ours. For though *prudentia*, indeed, seems frequently used by their best writers to express that idea, yet it is not confined to that single meaning, but is often applied by them to signify skill in any particular science. But good sense is something very distinct from knowledge; and it is an instance of the poverty of the Latin language, that she is obliged to use the same word as a mark for two such different ideas.

Were I to explain what I understand by good sense, I should call it right reason; but right reason that arises, not from formal and logical deductions, but from a sort of intuitive faculty in the soul, which distinguishes by immediate perception: a kind of innate sagacity, that, in many of its properties, seems very much to resemble instinct. It would be improper, therefore, to say, that sir Isaac

Newton showed his good sense by those amazing discoveries which he made in natural philosophy: the operations of this gift of Heaven are rather instantaneous, than the result of any tedious process. Like Diomed, after Minerva had endowed him with the power of discerning gods from mortals, the man of good sense discovers, at once, the truth of those objects he is most concerned to distinguish, and conducts himself with suitable caution and security.

It is for this reason, possibly, that this quality of the mind is not so often found united with learning as one could wish: for good sense being accustomed to receive her discoveries without labour or study, she cannot so easily wait for those truths, which being placed at a distance, and lying concealed under numberless covers, require much pains and application to unfold.

But though good sense is not in the number, nor always, it must be owned, in the company of the sciences; yet it is (as the most sensible of poets has justly observed)

fairly worth the seven.

Rectitude of understanding is, indeed, the most useful, as well as the most noble, of human endowments, as it is the sovereign guide and director in every branch of civil and social intercourse.

Upon whatever occasion this enlightening faculty is exerted, it is always sure to act with distinguished eminence; but its chief and peculiar province seems to lie in the commerce of the world. Accordingly we may observe, that those who have

conversed more with men than with books, whose wisdom is derived rather from experience than contemplation, generally possess this happy talent with superior perfection: for good sense, though it cannot be acquired, may be improved; and the world, I believe, will ever be found to afford the most kindly soil for its cultivation.

I know not whether true good sense is not a more uncommon quality even than true wit; as there is nothing, perhaps, more extraordinary than to meet with a person, whose entire conduct and notions are under the direction of this supreme guide. The single instance, at least, which I could produce of its acting steadily and invariably throughout the whole of a character, is that which Euphronius, I am sure, would not allow me to mention: at the same time, perhaps, I am rendering my own pretensions of this kind extremely questionable, when I thus venture to throw before you my sentiments upon a subject, of which you are universally acknowledged so perfect a master. I am, &c.

LI. TO PALEMON.

May 29, 1743.

I ESTEEM your letters in the number of my most valuable possessions, and preserve them as so many prophetic leaves upon which the fate of our distracted nation is inscribed. But, in exchange for the maxims of a patriot, I can only send you the reveries of a recluse, and give you the stones of the brook for the gold of Ophir. Never, indeed, Palemon, was there a commerce more unequal than that wherein you are contented to engage with me; and I could scarce answer it to my conscience

to continue a traffic, where the whole benefit accrues singly to myself, did I not know, that to confer without the possibility of an advantage, is the most pleasing exercise of generosity. I will venture then to make use of a privilege which I have long enjoyed; as I well know you love to mix the meditations of the philosopher with the reflections of the statesman, and can turn with equal relish from the politics of Tacitus to the morals of Seneca.

I was in my garden this morning somewhat earlier than usual, when the sun, as Milton describes him,

With wheels yet hovering o'er the ocean brim
Shot parallel to the earth his dewy ray.

There is something in the opening of the dawn, at this season of the year, that enlivens the mind with a sort of cheerful seriousness, and fills it with a certain calm rapture in the consciousness of its existence. For my own part, at least, the rising of the sun has the same effect on me, as it is said to have had on the celebrated statue of Memnon: and I never observe that glorious luminary breaking out upon me, that I do not find myself harmonized for the whole day.

Whilst I was enjoying the freshness and tranquillity of this early season, and considering the many reasons I had to join in offering up that morning incense, which the poet I just now mentioned, represents as particularly arising at this hour "from the earth's great altar;" I could not but esteem it as a principal blessing, that I was entering upon a new day with health and spirits. To

awake with recruited vigour for the transactions of life, is a mercy so generally dispensed, that it passes, like other the ordinary bounties of Providence, without making its due impression. Yet, were one never to rise under these happy circumstances, without reflecting what numbers there are, who, (to use the language of the most pathetic of authors) when they said, "My bed shall comfort me, my couch shall ease my complaint," were, like him, "full of tossings to and fro, unto the dawning of the day," or "scared with dreams, and terrified through visions"—were one to consider, I say, how many pass their nights in all the horrors of a disturbed imagination, or all the wakefulness of real pains, one could not find one's self exempt from such uneasy slumbers, or such terrible vigils, without double satisfaction and gratitude. There is nothing, indeed, contributes more to render a man contented with that draught of life which is poured out to himself, than thus to reflect on those more bitter ingredients which are sometimes mingled in the cup of others.

In pursuing the same vein of thought, I could not but congratulate myself, that I had no part in that turbulent drama which was going to be re-acted upon the great stage of the world; and rejoiced that it was my fortune to stand a distant and unengaged spectator of those several characters that would shortly fill the scene. This suggested to my remembrance a passage in the Roman tragic poet, where he describes the various pursuits of the busy and ambitious world, in very just and lively colours:

Ille superbos aditus regum
Durasque fores, expers somni,
Colit: Hic nullo fine beatus
Componit opes, gazis inhians,
Et congesto pauper in auro est.
Illum populi favor attonitum,
Fluctuque magis mobile vulgus,
Aurâ tumidum tollit inani.
Hic clamosi rabiosa fori
Jurgia vendens improbus, iras
Et verba locat.

and I could not forbear saying to myself, in the language of the same author,

me mea tellus
Lare secreto tutoque tegat!

Yet this circumstance, which your friend considers as so valuable a privilege, has been esteemed by others as the most severe of afflictions. The celebrated count de Bussy Rabutin has written a little treatise, wherein, after having shown that the greatest men upon the stage of the world are generally the most unhappy, he closes the account by producing himself as an instance of the truth of what he had been advancing. But can you guess, Palemon, what this terrible disaster was, which thus entitled him to a rank in the number of these unfortunate heroes? He had composed, it seems, certain satirical pieces which gave offence to Louis the XIVth; for which reason that monarch banished him from the slavery and dependence of a court, to live in ease and freedom at his country-house. But the world had taken too strong possession of his heart, to suffer him to leave even the worst part of it without reluctance; and, like the pa-

triarch's wife, he looked back with regret upon the scene from which he was kindly driven, though there was nothing in the prospect but flames. Adieu. I am, &c.

LII. TO EUPHRONIUS.

Aug. 20, 1742.

SURELY, Euphronius, the spirit of criticism has strangely possessed you. How else could you be willing to step aside so often from the amusements of the gayest scenes, in order to examine with me certain beauties, far other than those which at present it might be imagined would wholly engage your attention? Who, indeed, that sees my friend over night supporting the vivacity of the most sprightly assemblies, would expect to find him the next morning gravely poring over antiquated Greek, and weighing the merits of ancient and modern geniuses? But I have long admired you as an elegant *spectator formarum*, in every sense of the expression; and you can turn, I know, from the charms of beauty to those of wit, with the same refinement of taste and rapture. I may venture, therefore, to resume our critical correspondence without the form of an apology; as it is the singular character of Euphronius to reconcile the philosopher with the man of the world, and judiciously divide his hours between action and retirement.

What has been said of a celebrated French translator, may, with equal justice, be applied to Mr. Pope: "that it is doubtful whether the dead or the living are most obliged to him." His translations of Homer, and imitations of Horace, have introduced to the acquaintance of the English reader,

two of the most considerable authors in all antiquity ; as, indeed, they are equal to the credit of so many original works. A man must have a very considerable share of the different spirit which distinguishes those most admirable poets, who is capable of representing, in his own language, so true an image of their respective manners. If we look no farther than these works themselves, without considering them with respect to any attempts of the same nature which have been made by others, we shall have sufficient reason to esteem them for their own intrinsic merit. But how will this uncommon genius rise in our admiration, when we compare his classical translations with those similar performances, which have employed some of the most celebrated of our poets ? I have lately been turning over the Iliad with this view ; and, perhaps, it will be no unentertaining amusement to you, to examine the several copies which I have collected of the original, as taken by some of the most considerable of our English masters. To single them out for this purpose according to the order of the particular books, or passages, upon which they have respectively exercised their pencils, the pretensions of Mr. Tickel stand first to be examined.

The action of the Iliad opens, you know, with the speech of Chryses, whose daughter, having been taken captive by the Grecians, was allotted to Agamemnon. This venerable priest of Apollo is represented as addressing himself to the Grecian chiefs, in the following pathetic simplicity of eloquence :

Ατρείδαι τε, και αλλοι εϋκνημιδες Αχαιοι,
 Τμιν μεν θεοι δοιεν, Ολυμπια δωματ' εχοντες,

Εκπερσαι Πριαμοιο πολιν, ευ δ' οικαδ' ικεσθαι·
 Παιδα δε μοι λυσασθε φιλην, τα δ' αποινα δεχεσθε,
 Αζομενοι Διος υιον εκηβολον Απολλωνα. i. 17.

Great Atreus' sons, and warlike Greece, attend:
 So may the immortal Gods your cause defend,
 So may you Priam's lofty bulwarks burn,
 And rich in gather'd spoils to Greece return;
 As, for these gifts, my daughter you bestow,
 And reverence due to great Apollo show,
 Jove's favourite offspring, terrible in war,
 Who sends his shafts unerring from afar.—*Tickel.*

That affecting tenderness of the father, which Homer has marked out by the melancholy flow of the line, as well as by the endearing expression of

Παιδα δε μοι λυσασθε φιλην,

is entirely lost by Mr. Tickel. When Chryses coldly mentions his daughter, without a single epithet of concern or affection, he seems much too indifferent himself to move the audience in his favour. But the whole passage, as it stands in Mr. Pope's Iliad, is in general animated with a far more lively spirit of poetry. Who can observe the moving posture of supplication in which he has drawn the venerable old priest, stretching out his arms in all the affecting warmth of entreaty, without sharing in his distress, and melting into pity?

Ye kings and warriors! may your vows be crown'd,
 And Troy's proud walls lie level with the ground:
 May Jove restore you, when your toils are o'er,
 Safe to the pleasures of your native shore:
 But oh! relieve a wretched parent's pain,
 And give Chryseis to these arms again.

If mercy fail, yet let my presents move ;
And dread avenging Phœbus, son of Jove.—*Pope.*

The insinuation with which Chryses closes his speech that the Grecians must expect the indignation of Apollo would pursue them if they rejected the petition of his priest, is happily intimated by a single epithet :

And dread *avenging* Phœbus ;

whereas, the other translator takes the compass of three lines to express the same thought less strongly.

When the heralds are sent by Agamemnon to Achilles in order to demand Briseïs, that chief is prevailed upon to part with her : and, accordingly, directs Patroclus to deliver up this contested beauty into their hands :

Πατροκλος δε φιλω επεπειθεθ' εταιρω,
Εκ δ' αγαγε κλισιης Βρισηϊδα καλλιπαρην,
Δωκε δ' αγειν τω δ' αυτις ιτην παρα νηας Αχαιων.
Η δ' αεκουσ' αμα τοισι γυνη κινεν. i. 345.

The beauty of Briseïs, as described in these lines, together with the reluctance with which she is here represented as forced from her lord, cannot but touch the reader in a very sensible manner. Mr. Tickel, however, has debased this affecting picture, by the most unpoetical and familiar diction. I will not delay you with making my objections in form to his language ; but have distinguished the exceptionable expressions in the lines themselves :

Patroclus *his dear friend* obliged,
 And usher'd in the lovely weeping maid;
Re-sigh'd she, as the heralds took her hand,
 And oft look'd back, slow moving o'er the strand.

Tickel.

Our British Homer has restored this piece to its original grace and delicacy :

Patroclus now the unwilling beauty brought :
 She, in soft sorrows, and in pensive thought,
 Pass'd silent, as the heralds held her hand,
 And oft look'd back, slow moving o'er the strand.

Pope.

The tumultuous behaviour of Achilles, as described by Homer in the lines immediately following, affords a very pleasing and natural contrast to the more composed and silent sorrow of Briseïs. The poet represents that hero as suddenly rushing out from his tent, and flying to the sea-shore, where he gives vent to his indignation ; and, in bitterness of soul, complains to Thetis, not only of the dishonour brought upon him by Agamemnon, but of the injustice even of Jupiter himself :

αὐτὰρ Ἀχιλλεύς

Δακρυσας, ἐταρων ἀφ' αὐτοῦ ἐζέτο νοσφιλίσθεις,
 Θιν' ἐφ' ἄλός πολιν, ὁρώων ἐπὶ οἰνοπα πόντον.
 Πολλὰ δὲ μητρὶ φίλην ἤρησατο, χεῖρας ὀρεγνύς.

i. 348.

Mr. Tickel, in rendering the sense of these lines, has risen into a somewhat higher flight of poetry than usual. However, you will observe his expression, in one or two places, is exceedingly languid

and prosaical ; as the epithet he has given to the waves is highly injudicious. *Curling billows* might be very proper in describing a calm, but suggests too pleasing an image to be applied to the ocean when represented as *black with storms*.

The widow'd hero, when the fair was gone,
Far from his friends, sat, bathed in tears, alone.
On the cold beach he sat, and fix'd his eyes
Where, black with storms, the *curling billows* rise ;
And as the sea, wide-rolling, he survey'd,
With out-stretch'd arms to his fond mother pray'd.
Tickel.

Mr. Pope has opened the thought in these lines with great dignity of numbers, and exquisite propriety of imagery ; as the additional circumstances which he has thrown in are so many beautiful improvements upon his author :

Not so his loss the fierce Achilles bore ;
But sad retiring to the sounding shore,
O'er the wild margin of the deep he hung,
That kindred deep from which his mother sprung :
Then, bathed in tears of anger and disdain,
Thus loud lamented to the stormy main.—*Pope.*

Apollo having sent a plague among the Grecians, in resentment of the injury done to his priest Chryses by detaining his daughter, Agamemnon consents that Chryseïs shall be restored. Accordingly a ship is fitted out under the command of Ulysses, who is employed to conduct the damsel to her father. That hero and his companions being arrived at Chrysa, the place to which they were bound, deliver up their charge ; and having

performed a sacrifice to Apollo, set sail early the next morning for the Grecian camp. Upon this occasion Homer exhibits to us a most beautiful sea-piece :

Ημος δ' ηελιος κατεδυ, και επι κνεφας ηλθε,
 Δη τοτε κοιμησαντο παρα πρυμνησια νηος.
 Ημος δ' ηριγενεια φανη ροδοδακτυλος Ηως,
 Και τοτ' επειτ' αναγοντο μετα στρατον ευρυν Αχαιων.
 Τοισιν δ' ικμενον ουρον ιει εκαεργος Απολλων.
 Οι δ' ιστον στησαντ', ανα δ' ιστια λευκα πετασσαν.
 Εν δ' ανεμος πρησεν μεσον ιστιον, αμφι δε κυμα
 Στειρη πορφυρεον μεγαλ' ιαχε, νηος ιουσης.
 Η δ' εθεεν κατα κυμα διαπρησσουσα κελευθα. i. 475.

If there is any passage throughout Mr. Tickel's translation of this book, which has the least pretence to stand in competition with Mr. Pope's version, it is undoubtedly that which corresponds with the Greek lines just now quoted. It would indeed be an instance of great partiality not to acknowledge they breathe the true spirit of poetry; and I must own myself at a loss which to prefer upon the whole; though I think Mr. Pope is evidently superior to his rival in his manner of opening the description :

At evening through the shore dispersed, they sleep
 Hush'd by the distant roarings of the deep.
 When now, ascending from the shades of night,
 Aurora glow'd in all her rosy light,
 The daughter of the dawn : the awaken'd crew
 Back to the Greeks encamp'd their course renew :
 The breezes freshen : for, with friendly gales,
 Apollo swell'd their wide-distended sails :
 Cleft by the rapid prow, the waves divide,
 And in hoarse murmurs break on either side.—*Tickel.*

'Twas night: the chiefs beside their vessel lie,
 Till rosy morn had purpled o'er the sky:
 Then launch, and hoist the mast; indulgent gales,
 Supplied by Phœbus, fill the swelling sails;
 The milk-white canvass bellying as they blow,
 The parted ocean foams and roars below:
 Above the bounding billows swift they flew, &c.—*Pope.*

There is something wonderfully pleasing in that judicious pause, which Mr. Pope has placed at the beginning of these lines. It necessarily awakens the attention of the reader, and gives a much greater air of solemnity to the scene, than if the circumstance of the time had been less distinctly pointed out, and blended, as in Mr. Tickel's translation, with the rest of the description.

Homer has been celebrated by antiquity for those sublime images of the Supreme Being, which he so often raises in the *Iliad*. It is Macrobius, if I remember right, who informs us, that Phidias being asked from whence he took the idea of his celebrated statue of Olympian Jupiter, acknowledged that he had heated his imagination by the following lines:

Η, και κυανεησιν επ' οφρυσιν νευσε Κρονιων
 Αμβροσιαι δ' αρα χαιται επερρωσαντο ανακτος
 Κρατος απ' αθανατοιο· μεγαν δ' ελελιξεν Ολυμπου.

i. 528.

But whatever magnificence of imagery Phidias might discover in the original, the English reader will scarce, I imagine, conceive any thing very grand and sublime from the following copy:

This said, his kingly brow the sire inclined,
 The large black curls fell awful from behind,
 Thick shadowing the stern forehead of the god :
 Olympus trembled at the almighty nod.—*Tickel.*

That our modern statuaries, however, may not have an excuse for burlesquing the figure of the great father of gods and men, for want of the benefit of so animating a model, Mr. Pope has preserved it to them in all its original majesty ;

He spoke, and awful bends his sable brows ;
 Shakes his ambrosial curls, and gives the nod,
 The stamp of fate, and sanction of the god :
 High heaven with trembling the dread signal took,
 And all Olympus to the centre shook.—*Pope.*

I took occasion, in a former letter, to make some exceptions to a passage or two in the parting of Hector and Andromache, as translated by your favourite poet. I shall now produce a few lines from the same beautiful episode, for another purpose, and in order to show, with how much more masterly a hand, even than Dryden himself, our great improver of English poetry has worked upon the same subject.

As Andromache is going to the tower of Ilion, in order to take a view of the field of battle, Hector meets her, together with her son, the young As-tyanax, at the Scaean gate. The circumstances of this sudden interview are finely imagined. Hector, in the first transport of his joy, is unable to utter a single word ; at the same time that Andromache, tenderly embracing his hands, bursts out into a flood of tears :

Ἦτοι ὁ μὲν μείδησεν ἰδὼν ἐς παῖδα σιωπῇ·
 Ἀνδρομαχὴ δὲ οἱ ἀγχι παρίστατο δακρυχέουσα,
 Ἐντ' ἀρα οἱ φῦ χειρὶ, ἐπὸς τ' ἔφατ', ἐκ τ' ὀνομαζέ·
 vi. 404.

Dryden has translated this passage with a cold and unpoetical fidelity to the mere letter of the original :

Hector beheld him with a silent smile;
 His tender wife stood weeping by the while;
 Press'd in her own, his warlike hand she took,
 Then sigh'd, and thus prophetically spoke.—*Dryden.*

But Pope has judiciously taken a larger compass, and, by heightening the piece with a few additional touches, has wrought it up in all the affecting spirit of tenderness and poetry :

Silent the warrior smiled, and pleased, resign'd
 To tender passions all his mighty mind :
 His beauteous princess cast a mournful look,
 Hung on his hand, and then dejected spoke ;
 Her bosom labour'd with a boding sigh,
 And the big tear stood trembling in her eye.—*Pope.*

Andromache afterwards endeavours to persuade Hector to take upon himself the defence of the city, and not hazard a life, so important, she tells him, to herself and his son, in the more dangerous action of the field :

Τὴν δ' αὐτὲ προσέειπε μέγας κορυθαιολὸς Ἑκτωρ.
 Ἡ καὶ ἐμοὶ ταδε πάντα μέλει, γυναι· ἀλλὰ μάλ' αἶνός
 Αἰδέομαι Τρῶας καὶ Τρῳάδας ἐλκεσιπέπλους,
 Αἰκτε, κακὸς ὥς, γοσφὶν ἀλυσκαζῶ πολέμοιο. vi. 440.

To whom the noble Hector thus replied:
That and the rest are in my daily care;
But should I shun the dangers of the war,
With scorn the Trojans would reward my pains,
And their proud ladies with their sweeping trains.
The Grecian swords and lances I can bear:
But loss of honour is my only care.—*Dryden.*

Nothing can be more flat and unanimated than these lines. One may say, upon this occasion, what Dryden himself, I remember, somewhere observes, that a good poet is no more like himself in a dull translation, than his dead carcass would be to his living body. To catch, indeed, the soul of our Grecian bard, and breathe his spirit into an English version, seems to have been a privilege reserved solely for Pope:

The chief replied: that post shall be my care;
Nor that alone, but all the works of war.
How would the sons of Troy, in arms renown'd,
And Troy's proud dames, whose garments sweep the ground,
Attaint the lustre of my former name,
Should Hector basely quit the fields of fame!—*Pope.*

In the farther prosecution of this episode, Hector prophesies his own death, and the destruction of Troy; to which he adds, that Andromache should be led captive into Argos, where, among other disgraceful offices, which he particularly enumerates, she should be employed, he tells her, in the servile task of drawing water. The different manner in which this last circumstance is expressed by our two English poets, will afford the strongest instance, how much additional force the

same thought will receive from a more graceful turn of phrase :

Or from deep wells the living stream to take,
And on thy weary shoulders bring it back.—*Dryden*.

or bring

The weight of waters from Hyperia's spring.—*Pope*.

It is in certain peculiar turns of diction that the language of poetry is principally distinguished from that of prose, as indeed the same words are, in general, common to them both. It is in a turn of this kind, that the beauty of the last quoted line consists. For the whole grace of the expression would vanish, if, instead of the two substantives which are placed at the beginning of the verse, the poet had employed the more common syntax of a substantive with its adjective.

When this faithful pair have taken their final adieu of each other, Hector returns to the field of battle, at the same time that the disconsolate Andromache joins her maidens in the palace. Homer describes this circumstance in the following tender manner :

Ὡς ἀρὰ φωνήσας κορυθ' εἶλετο φαιδιμος Ἑκτωρ
Ἰππουριν· ἀλοχος δὲ φίλη οἰκόνδε βέβηκει
Ἐντροπαλιζομένη, θαλερόν κατὰ δακρυ χέουσα.
Αἰψὰ δ' ἐπειθ' ἱκανέε δομοὺς εὐ ναιετάοντας
Ἑκτορος ἀνδροφονοιο· κίχθησατο δ' ἐνδοθὶ πολλὰς
Ἀμφιπολοὺς, τῆσιν δὲ γούον πασησὶν ἐνωρσεν.
Αἱ μὲν ἐτι ζῶον γούον Ἑκτορά ψ' ἐνὶ οἴκῳ. vi. 494.

I will make no remarks upon the different success of our two celebrated poets in translating this pas-

sage ; but, after having laid both before you, leave their versions to speak for themselves. The truth is, the disparity between them is much too visible to require any comment to render it more observable :

At this, for new replies he did not stay,
But laced his crested helm, and strode away.
His lovely consort to her house return'd,
And, looking often back, in silence mourn'd :
Home when she came, her secret woe she vents,
And fills the palace with her loud laments ;
Those loud laments her echoing maids restore ;
And Hector, yet alive, as dead deplore.—*Dryden.*

Thus having said, the glorious chief resumes
His towery helmet, black with shading plumes.
His princess parts with a prophetic sigh,
Unwilling parts, and oft reverts her eye,
That stream'd at every look ; then moving slow,
Sought her own palace, and indulged her woe.
There, while her tears deplored the godlike man,
Through all the train the soft infection ran ;
The pious maids their mingled sorrow shed,
And mourn the living Hector as the dead.—*Pope.*

As I purpose to follow Mr. Pope through those several parts of the Iliad, where any of our distinguished poets have gone before him ; I must lead you on till we come to the speech of Sarpedon to Glaucus, in the twelfth book :

Γλαυκε, τῇ δὴ νῶϊ τετιμημέσθαι μάλιστ'
Ἔδρῃ τε, κρεασίν τε, ἰδε πλείοις δεπασσίν,
Ἐν Λυκίῃ, πάντες δέ, θεοὺς ὥς, εἰσορώσι,
Καὶ τεμένος νεμομέσθαι μέγα Ξανθοῖο παρ' οὐχθας
Κάλον, φυτάλης καὶ αρουρῆς πυροφοροῖο ;
Τῷ νῦν χρη Λυκίοισι μετὰ πρωτοῖσιν ἑόντας

Εσταμεν, ηδε μαχης καυστειρης αντιβολησαι·
 Οφρα τις ωδ' ειπη Λυκιων πυκα θωρηκταων,
 Ου μαν ακλειεις Λυκιην κατακοιρανουσιν
 Ημετεροι βασιληες; εδουσι τε πιονα μηλα,
 Οινον τ' εξαιτον, μελιηδεα· αλλ' αρα και ις
 Εσθλη, επει Λυκιοισι μετα πρωτοισι μαχονται.
 Ω πεπον· ει μεν γαρ πολεμον περι τουδε φυγοντες,
 Αιειδη μελλοιμεν αγηρω τ' αθανατω τε
 Εσσεσθ', ουτε κεν αυτος ενι πρωτοισι μαχοιμην,
 Ουτε κε σε στελλοιμι μαχην ες κυδιανειραν·
 Νυν δ' (εμπης γαρ κηρες εφεστασιν θανατοιο
 Μυριαι, ας ουκ εστι φυγειν βροτον, ουδ' υπαλυξαι)
 Ιομεν· ηε τω ευχος ορεξομεν, ηε τις ημιν. xii. 310.

This spirited speech has been translated by the famous author of Cooper's Hill :

Above the rest why is our pomp and power,
 Our flocks, our herds, and our possessions more ?
 Why all the tributes land and sea afford,
 Heap'd in great chargers, load our sumptuous board ?
 Our cheerful guests carouse the sparkling tears
 Of the rich grape, whilst music charms their ears.
 Why, as we pass, do those on Xanthus' shore
 As gods behold us, and as gods adore ?
 But that, as well in danger as degree,
 We stand the first; that when our Lycians see
 Our brave examples, they admiring say,
 Behold our gallant leaders ! these are they
 Deserve their greatness; and unenvied stand,
 Since what they act transcends what they command.
 Could the declining of this fate, oh ! friend,
 Our date to immortality extend,
 Or if death sought not them who seek not death ;
 Would I advance, or should my vainer breath
 With such a glorious folly thee inspire ?
 But since with fortune nature doth conspire;
 Since age, disease, or some less noble end,
 Though not less certain, does our days attend ;

Since 'tis decreed, and to this period led
 A thousand ways, the noblest paths we'll tread;
 And bravely on, till they, or we, or all,
 A common sacrifice to honour fall.

Denham.

Mr. Pope passes so high an encomium on these lines, as to assure us, that, if his translation of the same passage has any spirit, it is in some degree due to them. It is certain they have great merit, considering the state of our English versification when Denham flourished: but they will by no means support Mr. Pope's compliment, any more than they will bear to stand in competition with his numbers. And, I dare say, you will join with me in the same opinion, when you consider the following version of this animated speech:

Why boast we, Glaucus, our extended reign,
 Where Xanthus' streams enrich the Lycian plain?
 Our numerous herds, that range the fruitful field,
 And hills where vines their purple harvest yield?
 Our foaming bowls with purer nectar crown'd?
 Our feasts enhanced with music's sprightly sound?
 Why on these shores are we with joy survey'd,
 Admired as heroes, and as gods obey'd?
 Unless great acts superior merit prove,
 And vindicate the bounteous powers above;
 That when, with wondering eyes, our martial bands
 Behold our deeds transcending our commands,
 Such, they may cry, deserve the sovereign state,
 Whom those that envy dare not imitate.
 Could all our care elude the gloomy grave,
 Which claims no less the fearful than the brave,
 For lust of fame I should not vainly dare
 In fighting fields, nor urge thy soul to war.
 But since, alas! ignoble age must come,
 Disease, and death's inexorable doom;

The life which others pay, let us bestow,
 And give to fame what we to nature owe;
 Brave though we fall, and honour'd if we live,
 Or let us glory gain, or glory give. *Pope.*

If any thing can be justly objected to this translation, it is, perhaps, that in one or two places it is too diffused and descriptive for that agitation in which it was spoken. In general, however, one may venture to assert, that it is warmed with the same ardour of poetry and heroism that glows in the original: as those several thoughts, which Mr. Pope has intermixed of his own, naturally arise out of the sentiments of his author, and are perfectly conformable to the character and circumstances of the speaker.

I shall close this review with Mr. Congreve, who has translated the petition of Priam to Achilles for the body of his son Hector, together with the lamentations of Andromache, Hecuba, and Helen.

Homer represents the unfortunate king of Troy as entering unobserved into the tent of Achilles: and illustrates the surprise which arose in that chief and his attendants, upon the first discovery of Priam, by the following simile:

Ως δ' οταν ανδρ' ατη πυκινη λαβη, οστ' ενι πατρη
 Φωτα κατακτεινας, αλλων εξικετο δημον,
 Ανδρος ες αφνειε δαμβος δ' εχει εισορωντας·
 Ως Αχιλεως δαμβησεν, ιδων Πριαμον θεοειδεα.

xxiv. 480.

Nothing can be more languid and inelegant than the manner in which Congreve has rendered this passage:

But as a wretch who has a murder done,
 And seeking refuge, does from justice run ;
 Entering some house in haste where he's unknown,
 Creates amazement in the lookers-on :
 So did Achilles gaze, surprised to see
 The godlike Priam's royal misery.—*Congreve*.

But Pope has raised the same thought with his
 usual grace and spirit :

As when a wretch, who, conscious of his crime,
 Pursued for murder, flies his native clime ;
 Just gains some frontier, breathless, pale, amazed !
 All gaze, all wonder : thus Achilles gazed.—*Pope*.

The speech of Priam is wonderfully pathetic and affecting. He tells Achilles, that, out of fifty sons he had one only remaining ; and of him he was now unhappily bereaved by his sword. He conjures him, by his tenderness for his own father, to commiserate the most wretched of parents, who, by an uncommon severity of fate, was thus obliged to kiss those hands which were imbrued in the blood of his children .

Τῆ νυν εἶνεχ' ἱκανω νηας Ἀχαιῶν,
 Λυσόμενος παρα σείο, φέρω δ' ἀπερειαί' ἀποινα.
 Ἀλλ' αἰδεῖο θεῶς, Ἀχιλεῦ, αὐτὸν τ' ἐλεῆσον,
 Μνησαμένος σὲ πατρός· ἐγὼ δ' ἐλεεινότερος περ,
 Ἐτλην δ' οἱ ἄπω τις ἐπιχθονίος βροτὸς ἄλλος,
 Ἄνδρος παιδοφονοιο ποτὶ στομα χεῖρ' ὀρεγέσθαι.

xxiv. 501.

These moving lines Mr. Congreve has debased
 into the lowest and most unaffecting prose :

For his sake only I am hither come;
Rich gifts I bring, and wealth, an endless sum;
All to redeem that fatal prize you won,
A worthless ransom for so brave a son.
Fear the just gods, Achilles, and on me
With pity look; think you your father see:
Such as I am, he is: alone in this,
I can no equal have in miseries;
Of all mankind most wretched and forlorn,
Bow'd with such weight as never has been borne;
Reduced to kneel and pray to you, from whom
The spring and source of all my sorrows come;
With gifts to court mine and my country's bane,
And kiss those hands which have my children slain.

Congreve.

Nothing could compensate the trouble of labouring
through these heavy and tasteless rhymes, but the
pleasure of being relieved at the end of them with a
more lively prospect of poetry:

For him through hostile camps I bent my way;
For him thus prostrate at thy feet I lay;
Large gifts proportion'd to thy wrath I bear.
O hear the wretched, and the gods revere!
Think of thy father, and this face behold!
See him in me, as helpless and as old!
Though not so wretched: there he yields to me,
The first of men in sovereign misery;
Thus forced to kneel, thus grovelling to embrace
The scourge and ruin of my realm and race:
Suppliant my children's murderer to implore,
And kiss those hands yet reeking with their gore.

Pope.

Achilles having, at length, consented to restore
the dead body of Hector, Priam conducts it to his
palace. It is there placed in funeral pomp, at the

same time that mournful dirges are sung over the corpse, intermingled with the lamentations of Andromache, Hecuba, and Helen :

ΤΟΝ ΜΕΝ ΕΠΕΙΤΑ
Τρητοῖς ἐν λεχεεσσὶ θέσαν, παρὰ δ' εἰσαν αἰδῶς,
Θρηνηὼν ἐξάρχῃς οἷτε στονδεσσάν αἰδῆν
Οἱ μὲν ἄρ' ἐθρήνεον, ἐπὶ δὲ στεναχόντο γυναῖκες.

xxiv. 719.

There is something extremely solemn and affecting in Homer's description of this scene of sorrow. A translator who was touched with the least spark of poetry, could not, one should imagine, but rise beyond himself, in copying after so noble an original. It has not, however, been able to elevate Mr. Congreve above his usual flatness of numbers :

then laid

With care the body on a sumptuous bed :
And round about were skilful singers placed,
Who wept and sigh'd, and in sad notes express'd
Their moan : All in a chorus did agree
Of universal mournful harmony. *Congreve.*

It would be the highest injustice to the following lines to quote them in opposition to those of Mr. Congreve : I produce them, as marked with a vein of poetry much superior even to the original :

They weep, and place him on a bed of state.
A melancholy choir attend around
With plaintive sighs, and music's solemn sound :
Alternately they sing, alternate flow
The obedient tears, melodious in their woe ;
While deeper sorrows groan from each full heart,
And nature speaks at every pause of art. *Pope.*

Thus, Euphronius, I have brought before you some of the most renowned of our British bards, contending, as it were, for the prize of poetry; and there can be no debate to whom it justly belongs. Mr. Pope seems, indeed, to have raised our numbers to the highest possible perfection of strength and harmony: and, I fear, all the praise that the best succeeding poets can expect, as to their versification, will be, that they have happily imitated his manner. Farewell. I am, &c.

LIII. TO ORONTES.

July 2, 1741.

YOUR letter found me just upon my return from an excursion into Berkshire, where I had been paying a visit to a friend who is drinking the waters at Sunning-Hill. In one of my morning rides over that delightful country, I accidentally passed through a little village, which afforded me much agreeable meditation; as in times to come, perhaps, it will be visited by the lovers of the polite arts, with as much veneration as Virgil's tomb, or any other celebrated spot of antiquity. The place I mean is Binfield, where the poet to whom I am indebted (in common with every reader of taste) for so much exquisite entertainment, spent the earliest part of his youth. I will not scruple to confess, that I looked upon the scene where he planned some of those beautiful performances which first recommended him to the notice of the world, with a degree of enthusiasm; and could not but consider the ground as sacred, that was impressed with the footsteps of a genius that undoubtedly does the highest honour to our age and nation.

The situation of mind in which I found myself, upon this occasion, suggested to my remembrance a passage in Tully, which I thought I never so thoroughly entered into the spirit of before. That noble author, in one of his philosophical conversation-pieces, introduces his friend Atticus as observing the pleasing effect which scenes of this nature are wont to have upon one's mind: *Movemur enim* (says that polite Roman) *nescio quo pacto, locis ipsis, in quibus eorum, quos diligimus aut admiramur, adsunt vestigia. Me quidem ipsæ illæ nostræ Athenæ, non tam operibus magnificis exquisitisque antiquorum artibus delectant, quam recordatione summorum virorum, ubi quisque habitare, ubi sedere, ubi disputare sit solitus.*

Thus, you see, I could defend myself by an example of great authority were I in danger, upon this occasion, of being ridiculed as a romantic visionary. But I am too well acquainted with the refined sentiments of Orontes, to be under any apprehension he will condemn the impressions I have here acknowledged. On the contrary, I have often heard you mention, with approbation, a circumstance of this kind which is related of Silius Italicus. The annual ceremonies which that poet performed at Virgil's sepulchre, gave you a more favourable opinion of his taste, you confessed, than any thing in his works was able to raise.

It is certain, that some of the greatest names of antiquity have distinguished themselves by the high reverence they showed to the poetical character. Scipio, you may remember, desired to be laid in the same tomb with Ennius; and I am inclined to pardon that successful madman Alexander many of

his extravagances, for the generous regard he paid to the memory of Pindar, at the sacking of Thebes.

There seems, indeed, to be something in poetry, that raises the possessor of that very singular talent far higher in the estimation of the world in general, than those who excel in any other of the refined arts. And, accordingly, we find that poets have been distinguished by antiquity with the most remarkable honours. Thus Homer, we are told, was deified at Smyrna; as the citizens of Mitylene stamped the image of Sappho upon their public coin: Anacreon received a solemn invitation to spend his days at Athens, and Hipparchus, the son of Pisistratus, fitted out a splendid vessel in order to transport him thither; and when Virgil came into the theatre at Rome, the whole audience rose up and saluted him with the same respect as they would have paid to Augustus himself.

Painting, one should imagine, has the fairest pretension of rivalling her sister art in the number of admirers; and yet, where Apelles is mentioned once, Homer is celebrated a thousand times. Nor can this be accounted for by urging, that the works of the latter are still extant, while those of the former have perished long since: for is not Milton's *Paradise Lost* more universally esteemed than Raphael's cartoons?

The truth, I imagine, is, there are more who are natural judges of the harmony of numbers, than of the grace of proportions. One meets with but few who have not, in some degree at least, a tolerable ear; but a judicious eye is a far more uncommon possession. For as words are the universal me-

dium which all men employ, in order to convey their sentiments to each other, it seems a just consequence that they should be more generally formed for relishing and judging of performances in that way: whereas, the art of representing ideas by means of lines and colours, lies more out of the road of common use, and is, therefore, less adapted to the taste of the general run of mankind.

I hazard this observation, in the hopes of drawing from you your sentiments upon a subject, in which no man is more qualified to decide: as, indeed, it is to the conversation of Orontes that I am indebted for the discovery of many refined delicacies in the imitative arts, which, without his judicious assistance, would have lain concealed to me with other common observers. Adieu. I am, &c.

LIV. TO PHIDIPPUS.

I AM by no means surprised that the interview you have lately had with Cleanthes, has given you a much lower opinion of his abilities, than what you had before conceived: and since it has raised your curiosity to know my sentiments 'of his character, you shall have them with all that freedom you may justly expect.

I have always, then, considered Cleanthes as possessed of the most extraordinary talents; but his talents are of a kind which can only be exerted upon uncommon occasions. They are formed for the greatest depths of business and affairs; but absolutely out of all size for the shallows of ordinary life. In circumstances that require the most profound reasonings, in incidents that demand the

most penetrating politics, there Cleanthes would shine with supreme lustre. But view him in any situation inferior to these; place him where he cannot raise admiration, and he will, most probably, sink into contempt. Cleanthes, in short, wants nothing but the addition of certain minute accomplishments, to render him a finished character: but, being wholly destitute of those little talents which are necessary to render a man useful or agreeable in the daily commerce of the world, those great abilities which he possesses lie unobserved or neglected.

He often, indeed, gives one occasion to reflect how necessary it is to be master of a sort of under-qualities, in order to set off and recommend those of a superior nature. To know how to descend with grace and ease into ordinary occasions, and to fall in with the less important parties and purposes of mankind, is an art of more general influence, perhaps, than is usually imagined.

If I were to form, therefore, a youth for the world, I should, certainly, endeavour to cultivate in him these secondary qualifications, and train him up to an address in these lower arts, which render a man agreeable in conversation, or useful to the innocent pleasures and accommodations of life. A general skill and taste of this kind, with moderate abilities, will, in most instances, I believe, prove more successful in the world, than a much higher degree of capacity without them. I am, &c.

LV. TO EUPHRONIUS.

July 17, 1730.

IF the temper and turn of Timanthes had not long prepared me for what has happened, I should have received your account of his death with more surprise; but I suspected, from our earliest acquaintance, that his sentiments and disposition would lead him into a satiety of life, much sooner than nature would, probably, carry him to the end of it. When unsettled principles fall in with a constitutional gloominess of mind, it is no wonder the *tædium vitæ* should gain daily strength, till it pushes a man to seek relief against this most desperate of all distempers, from the point of a sword, or the bottom of a river.

But to learn to accommodate our taste to that portion of happiness which Providence has set before us, is, of all the lessons of philosophy, surely the most necessary. High and exquisite gratifications are not consistent with the appointed measures of humanity: and, perhaps, if we would fully enjoy the relish of our being, we should rather consider the miseries we escape, than too nicely examine the intrinsic worth of the happiness we possess. It is, at least, the business of true wisdom, to bring together every circumstance which may light up a flame of cheerfulness in the mind: and though we must be insensible if it should perpetually burn with the same unvaried brightness, yet prudence should preserve it as a sacred fire which is never to be totally extinguished.

I am persuaded this disgust of life is frequently indulged out of a principle of mere vanity. It is

esteemed as a mark of uncommon refinement, and as placing a man above the ordinary level of his species, to seem superior to the vulgar feelings of happiness. True good sense, however, most certainly consists not in despising, but in managing our stock of life to the best advantage; as a cheerful acquiescence in the measures of Providence is one of the strongest symptoms of a well-constituted mind. Self-weariness is a circumstance that ever attends folly: and to condemn our being is the greatest, and, indeed, the peculiar infirmity of human nature. It is a noble sentiment which Tully puts into the mouth of Cato, in his treatise upon old age: *Non lubet mihi* (says that venerable Roman) *deplorare vitam, quod multi, et ii docti sæpe fecerunt; neque me vixisse pœnitet: quoniam ita vixi, ut non frustra me natum existimem.*

It is in the power, indeed, of but a very small proportion of mankind, to act the same glorious part that afforded such high satisfaction to this distinguished patriot: but the number is yet far more inconsiderable of those who cannot, in any station, secure to themselves a sufficient fund of complacency to render life justly valuable. Who is it that is placed out of the reach of the highest of all gratifications, those of the generous affections; and that cannot provide for his own happiness by contributing something to the welfare of others? As this disease of the mind generally breaks out with most violence in those who are supposed to be endowed with a greater delicacy of taste and reason than is the usual allotment of their fellow-creatures, one may ask them, Whether there is any satiety in the pursuits of useful knowledge? or, if one can

ever be weary of benefiting mankind? Will not the fine arts supply a lasting feast to the mind? Or can there be wanting a pleasurable employment, so long as there remains even one advantageous truth to be discovered or confirmed? To complain that life has no joys, while there is a single creature whom we can relieve by our bounty, assist by our counsels, or enliven by our presence, is to lament the loss of that which we possess, and is just as rational as to die of thirst with the cup in our hands. But the misfortune is, when a man is settled into a habit of receiving all his pleasures from the mere selfish indulgences, he wears out of his mind the relish of every nobler enjoyment, at the same time that his powers of the sensual kind are growing more languid by each repetition. It is no wonder, therefore, he should fill up the measure of his gratifications long before he has completed the circle of his duration; and either wretchedly sit down the remainder of his days in discontent, or rashly throw them up in despair. Farewell. I am, &c.

LVI. TO TIMOCLEA.

Oct. 1, 1743.

CERTAINLY, Timoclea, you have a passion for the marvellous beyond all power of gratification. There is not an adventurer throughout the whole regions of chivalry, with whom you are unacquainted; and you have wandered through more folios than would furnish out a decent library. Mine, at least, you have totally exhausted; and have so cleared my shelves of knights-errant, that I have not a single hero remaining that ever was regaled in bower or

hall. But, though you have drained me of my whole stock of romance, I am not entirely unprovided for your entertainment; and have enclosed a little Grecian fable, for your amusement, which was lately transmitted to me by one of my friends. He discovered it, he tells me, among some old manuscripts, which have been long, it seems, in the possession of his family; and, if you will rely upon his judgment, it is a translation by Spenser's own hand.

This is all the history I have to give you of the following piece; the genuineness of which I leave to be settled between my friend and the critics; and am, &c.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF LYCON AND EU- PHORMIUS.

I.

Deem not, ye plaintive crew, that suffer wrong,
Ne thou, O man! who deal'st the tort misween
The equal gods, who heaven's sky mansions throng,
(Though viewless to the eyne they distant sheen)
Spectators reckless of our actions been.
Turning the volumes of grave sages old,
Where auncient saws in fable may be seen,
This truth I fond in paynim tale enroll'd,
Which for ensample drad my Muse shall here unfold.

II.

What time Arcadia's flowret vallies famed
Pelagus, first of monarchs old, obey'd,
There wonn'd a wight, and Lycon was he named,
Unawed by conscience, of no gods afraid,
Ne justice ruled his heart, ne mercy sway'd.

Some held him kin to that abhorred race,
 Which heaven's high towers with mad emprise assay'd ;
 And some his cruel lynage did ytrace
 From fell Erynnis join'd in Pluto's dire embrace.

III.

But he, perdy, far other tale did feign,
 And claim'd alliaunce with the sisters nine ;
 And deem'd himself (what deems not pride so vain ?)
 The peerless paragon of wit divine,
 Vaunting that every foe should rue its tine.
 Right doughty wight ! yet, sooth, withouten smart,
 All powerless fell the losel's shafts malign :
 'Tis virtue's arm to wield wit's heavenly dart,
 Point its keen barb with force, and send it to the heart.

IV.

One only impe he had, Pastora hight,
 Whose sweet amenaunce pleased each shepherd's eye :
 Yet pleased she not base Lycon's evil spright,
 Though blame in her not malice moten spy,
 Clear, without spot, as summer's cloudless sky.
 Hence poets feign'd, Lycean Pan array'd
 In Lycon's form, enflamed with passion high,
 Deceived her mother in the covert glade ;
 And from the stolen embrace ysprong the heavenly maid.

V.

Thus fabling they : meanwhile the damsel fair
 A shepherd youth remark'd, as o'er the plain
 She deffly paced along so debonair :
 Seem'd she as one of Dian's chosen train.
 Full many a fond excuse he knew to feign,
 In sweet converse to while with her the day,
 'Till love unwares his heedless heart did gain,
 Nor dempt he, simple wight, no mortal may
 The blinded God once harbour'd, when he list, foresay.

VI.

Now much he meditates if yet to speak,
 And now resolves his passion to conceal:
 "But sure," quoth he, "my seely heart will break
 If aye I smother what I aye must feel."
 At length by hope embolden'd to reveal,
 The lab'ring secret dropped from his tong.
 Whiles frequent singults check'd his faltering tale,
 In modest wise her head Pastora hong:
 For never maid more chaste inspired shepherd's song.

VII.

What needs me to recount in long detail
 The tender parley which these lemans held?
 How oft he vow'd his love her ne'er should fail;
 How oft the stream from forth her eyne outwell'd,
 Doubting if constancy yet ever dwell'd
 In heart of youthful wight: suffice to know,
 Each rising doubt he in her bosome quell'd.
 So parted they, more blithesome both, I trow:
 For rankling love conceal'd, me seems, is deadly woe.

VIII.

Eftsoons to Lycon swift the youth did fare,
 (Lagg'd ever youth when Cupid urged his way?)
 And straight his gentle purpose did declare,
 And sooth the mount'naunce of his herds display.
 Ne Lycon meant his suiten to foresay:
 "Be thine, Pastora, (quoth the master sly)
 And twice two thousand sheep her dower shall pay."
 Beat then the lover's heart with joyaunce high;
 Ne dempt that aught his bliss could now betray,
 Ne guess'd that foul deceit in Lycon's bosome lay.

IX.

So forth he yode to seek his reverend sire:
 (The good Euphormius shepherds him did call)
 How sweet Pastora did his bosome fire,
 Her worth, her promised flocks, he tolden all.
 "Ah! nere, my son, let Lycon thee enthrall,
 (Reply'd the sage, in wise experience old)
 Smooth is his tongue, but full of guile withal,
 In promise faithless, and in vaunting bold:
 Ne ever lamb of his will bleat within thy fold."

X.

With words prophetic thus Euphormius spake!
 And fact confirm'd what wisdom thus foretold.
 Full many a mean devise did Lycon make,
 The hoped day of spousal to withhold,
 Framing new trains when nought mote serve his old.
 Nathless he vow'd, Cyllene, cloud-topt hill,
 Should sooner down the lowly delve be roll'd,
 Than he his plighted promise nould fulfill;
 But when, perdy, or where, the caitiff sayen nill.

XI.

Whiles thus the tedious suns had journey'd round,
 Ne ought mote now the lovers' hearts divide,
 Ne trust was there, ne truth in Lycon found;
 The maid with matron Juno for her guide,
 The youth by Concord led in secret, hied
 To Hymen's sacred fane: the honest deed
 Each god approved, and close the bands were tied.
 Certes, till happier moments should succeed,
 No prying eyne they ween'd their emprise mote areed.

XII.

But prying eyne of Lycon 'twas in vain
 (Right practick in disguise) to hope beware.
He traced their covert steps to Hymen's fane,
 And joy'd to find them in his long-laid snare.
Algates, in semblaunt ire, he 'gan to swear,
And roaren loud as in displeasaunce high ;
 Then out he hurlen forth his daughter fair,
Forelore, the houseless child of misery,
Exposed to killing cold, and pinching penury.

XIII.

Ah ! whither now shall sad Pastora wend,
 To want abandon'd, and by wrongs oppress'd ?
Who shall the wretched outcast's teen befriend ?
 Lives mercy then, if not in parent's breast ?
 Yes, Mercy lives, the gentle goddess bless'd,
At Jove's right hand, to Jove for ever dear.
Aye at his feet she pleads the cause distress'd,
To sorrow's plains she turns his equal ear,
And wafts to heaven's star-throne fair vertue's silent tear.

XIV.

'Twas she that bade Euphormius quell each thought
 That well mote rise to check his generous aid.
Though high the torts which Lycon him had wrought,
 Though few the flocks his humble pastures fed ;
 When as he learn'd Pastora's hapless sted,
His breast humane with wonted pity flows,
 He oped his gates, the naked exile led
Beneath his roof ; a decent drapet throws
O'er her cold limbs, and sooths her undeserved woes.

XV.

Now loud-tongued Rumour bruited round the tale :
 The astoned swains uneath could credence give,
 That in Arcadia's unambitious vale
 A faytor false as Lycon e'er did live.
 But Jove (who in high heaven does mortals prive,
 And every deed in golden ballance weighs)
 To earth his flaming charet baden drive,
 And down descends, enwrapt in peerless blaze,
 To deal forth guerdon meet to good and evil ways.

XVI.

Where Eurymanthus, crown'd with many a wood,
 His silver stream through dasy'd vales does lead,
 Stretch'd on the flowery marge, in reekless mood,
 Proud Lycon sought, by charm of jocund reed,
 To lull the dire remorse of tortious deed.
 Him Jove accosts, in reverend semblaunce dight
 Of good Euphormius, and 'gan mild areed
 Of compact oft confirm'd, of fay yplight,
 Of nature's tender tye, of sacred rule of right.

XVII.

With lofty eyne, half loth to looke so low,
 Him Lycon view'd, and with swoll'n surquedry
 'Gan rudely treat his sacred old: When now
 Forth stood the God confess'd that rules the sky,
 In sudden sheen of drad divinity :
 " And know, false man," the Lord of thunders said,
 " Not unobserved by Heaven's all-present eye
 Thy cruel deeds; nor shall be unappay'd :
 Go ! be in form that best beseems thy thews, array'd."

XVIII.

Whiles yet he spake, the affrayed trembling wight,
 Transmew'd to blatant beast, with hidious howl
 Rush'd headlong forth, in well-deserved plight,
 'Midst dragons, minotaurs, and fiends to prowl,
 A wolf in form as erst a wolf in soul!
 To Pholoë forest wild he hied away,
 The horrid haunt of savage monsters foul.
 There helpless innocence is still his prey,
 Thief of the bleating fold, and shepherd's dire dismay.

XIX.

Then Jove to good Euphormius' cot did wend,
 Where peaceful dwelt the man of vertue high,
 Each shepherd's praise and eke each shepherd's friend,
 In every act of sweet humanity.
 Him Jove approaching in mild majesty,
 Greeted all hail! then bade him join the throng
 Of glit'rand lights that gild the glowing sky.
 There shepherds nightly view his orb yhong,
 Where bright he shines eterne, the brightest stars among.

LVII. TO CLYTANDER.

Feb. 8, 1739.

IF there was any thing in my former letter inconsistent with that esteem which is justly due to the ancients, I desire to retract it in this, and disavow every expression which might seem to give precedence to the moderns in works of genius. I am so far, indeed, from entertaining the sentiments you impute to me, that I have often endeavoured to account for that superiority which is so visible

in the compositions of their poets; and have frequently assigned their religion as in the number of those causes which probably concurred to give them this remarkable pre-eminence. That enthusiasm which is so essential to every true artist in the poetical way, was considerably heightened and inflamed by the whole turn of their sacred doctrines; and the fancied presence of their Muses had almost as wonderful an effect upon their thoughts and language, as if they had been really and divinely inspired. Whilst all nature was supposed to swarm with divinities, and every oak and fountain was believed to be the residence of some presiding deity; what wonder if the poet was animated by the imagined influence of such exalted society, and found himself transported beyond the ordinary limits of sober humanity? The mind, when attended only by mere mortals of superior powers, is observed to rise in her strength; and her faculties open and enlarge themselves, when she acts in the view of those for whom she has conceived a more than common reverence. But when the force of superstition moves in concert with the powers of imagination, and genius is inflamed by devotion, poetry must shine out in all her brightest perfection and splendour.

Whatever, therefore, the philosopher might think of the religion of his country, it was the interest of the poet to be thoroughly orthodox. If he gave up his creed, he must renounce his numbers; and there could be no inspiration where there were no Muses. This is so true, that it is in compositions of the poetical kind alone, that the ancients seem to have the principal advantage over the mo-

derms : in every other species of writing, one might venture, perhaps, to assert, that these latter ages have, at least, equalled them. When I say so, I do not confine myself to the productions of our own nation, but comprehend, likewise, those of our neighbours : and with that extent, the observation will possibly hold true, even without an exception in favour of history and oratory.

But whatever may, with justice, be determined concerning that question, it is certain, at least, that the practice of all succeeding poets confirms the notion for which I am principally contending. Though the altars of paganism have many ages since been thrown down, and groves are no longer sacred, yet the language of the poets has not changed with the religion of the times, but the gods of Greece and Rome are still adored in modern verse. Is not this a confession, that fancy is enlivened by superstition, and that the ancient bards caught their rapture from the old mythology ? I will own, however, that I think there is something ridiculous in this unnatural adoption, and that a modern poet makes but an awkward figure with his antiquated gods. When the pagan system was sanctified by popular belief, a piece of machinery of that kind, as it had the air of probability, afforded a very striking manner of celebrating any remarkable circumstance, or raising any common one. But now that this superstition is no longer supported by vulgar opinion, it has lost its principal grace and efficacy, and seems to be, in general, the most cold and uninteresting method in which a poet can work up his sentiments. What, for instance, can be more unaffecting and spiritless, than the compli-

ment which Boileau has paid to Louis XIV. on his famous passage over the Rhine? He represents the Naiads, you may remember, as alarming the god of that river with an account of the march of the French monarch; upon which the river god assumes the appearance of an old experienced commander, and flies to a Dutch fort, in order to exhort the garrison to sally out, and dispute the intended passage. Accordingly they range themselves in form of battle, with the Rhine at their head, who, after some vain efforts, observing Mars and Bellona on the side of the enemy, is so terrified with the view of those superior divinities, that he most gallantly runs away, and leaves the hero in quiet possession of his banks. I know not how far this may be relished by critics, or justified by custom; but as I am only mentioning my particular taste, I will acknowledge, that it appears to me extremely insipid and puerile.

I have not, however, so much of the spirit of Typhœus in me, as to make war upon the gods without restriction, and attempt to exclude them from their whole poetical dominions. To represent natural, moral, or intellectual qualities and affections as persons, and appropriate to them those general emblems by which their powers and properties are usually typified in pagan theology, may be allowed as one of the most pleasing and graceful figures of poetical rhetoric. When Dryden, addressing himself to the month of May, as to a person, says,

For thee the Graces lead the dancing Hours,

one may consider him as speaking only in meta-

phor : and when such shadowy beings are thus just shown to the imagination, and immediately withdrawn again, they certainly have a very powerful effect. But I can relish them no farther than as figures only : when they are extended in any serious composition beyond the limits of metaphor, and exhibited under all the various actions of real persons, I cannot but consider them as so many absurdities, which custom has unreasonably authorized. Thus Spenser, in one of his pastorals, represents the god of love as flying, like a bird, from bough to bough. A shepherd, who hears a rustling among the bushes, supposes it to be some game, and accordingly discharges his bow. Cupid returns the shot, and, after several arrows had been mutually exchanged between them, the unfortunate swain discovers whom it is he is contending with ; but as he is endeavouring to make his escape, receives a desperate wound in the heel. This fiction makes the subject of a very pretty idyllium in one of the Greek poets, yet is extremely flat and disgusting as it is adopted by our British bard. And the reason of the difference is plain : in the former it is supported by a popular superstition ; whereas no strain of imagination can give it the least air of probability, as it is worked up by the latter.

Quodcumque ostendis mihi sic, incredulus odi.—Hor.

I must confess, at the same time, that the inimitable Prior has introduced this fabulous scheme with such uncommon grace, and has paid so many genteel compliments to his mistress, by the assistance of Venus and Cupid, that one is carried off from observing the impropriety of this machinery,

by the pleasing address with which he manages it; and I never read his tender poems of this kind, without applying to him what Seneca somewhere says upon a similar occasion: *Major ille est qui judicium abstulit, quam qui meruit.*

To speak my sentiments in one word, I would leave the gods in full possession of allegorical and burlesque poems: in all others I would never suffer them to make their appearance in person, and as agents, but to enter only in simile, or allusion. It is thus Waller, of all our poets, has most happily employed them: and his application of the story of Daphne and Apollo will serve as an instance in what manner the ancient mythology may be adopted with the utmost propriety and beauty. Adieu. I am, &c.

LVIII. TO EUPHRONIUS.

Aug. 8, 1741.

I KNOW not in what disposition of mind this letter may find you: but I am sure you will not preserve your usual cheerfulness of temper, when I tell you that poor Hydaspes died last night.

I will not, at this time, attempt to offer that consolation to you, of which I stand in so much need myself. But may it not somewhat abate the anxiety of our mutual grief, to reflect, that however considerable our own loss is, yet, with respect to himself, it scarce deserves to be lamented that he arrived so much earlier at the grave than his years and his health seemed to promise? For who, my friend, that has any experience of the world, would wish to extend his duration to old age? What, indeed, is length of days but to survive all

one's enjoyments, and, perhaps, to survive even one's very self? I have somewhere met with an ancient inscription founded upon this sentiment, which infinitely pleased me. It was fixed upon a bath, and contained an imprecation in the following terms, against any one who should attempt to remove the building:

QVISQVIS. HOC. SVSTVLERIT.

AVT. IVSSERIT.

VLTIMVS. SVORVM. MORIATVR.

The thought is conceived with great delicacy and justness, as there cannot, perhaps, be a sharper calamity to a generous mind, than to see itself stand single amidst the ruins of whatever rendered the world most desirable.

Instances of the sort I am lamenting, while the impressions remain fresh upon the mind, are sufficient to damp the gayest hopes, and chill the warmest ambition. When one sees a person in the full bloom of life, thus destroyed by one sudden blast, one cannot but consider all the distant schemes of mankind as the highest folly.

It is amazing indeed, that a creature such as man, with so many memorials around him of the shortness of his duration, and who cannot ensure to himself even the next moment, should yet plan designs which run far into futurity. The business, however, of life must be carried on; and it is necessary, for the purpose of human affairs, that mankind should resolutely act upon very precarious contingencies. Too much reflection, therefore, is

as inconsistent with the appointed measures of our station as too little ; and there cannot be a less desirable turn of mind, than one that is influenced by an over-refined philosophy. At least it is by considerations of this sort, that I endeavour to call off my thoughts from pursuing too earnestly those reasonings, which the occasion of this letter is apt to suggest. This use, however, one may justly make of the present accident, that whilst it contracts the circle of friendship, it should render it so much the more valuable to us, who yet walk within its limits. Adieu. I am, &c.

LIX. TO HORTENSIUS.

May 4, 1740.

IF the ingenious piece you communicated to me requires any farther touches of your pencil, I must acknowledge the truth to be, what you are inclined to suspect, that my friendship has imposed upon my judgment. But though, in the present instance, your delicacy seems far too refined, yet, in general, I must agree with you, that works of the most permanent kind are not the effect of a lucky moment, nor struck out at a single heat. The best performances, indeed, have generally cost the most labour ; and that ease, which is so essential to fine writing, has seldom been attained without repeated and severe corrections : *Ludentis speciem dabit et torquebitur*, is a motto that may be applied, I believe, to most successful authors of genius. With as much facility as the numbers of the natural Prior seem to have flowed from him, they were the

result (if I am not misinformed) of much application : and a friend of mine, who undertook to transcribe one of the noblest performances of the finest genius that this, or, perhaps, any age can boast, has often assured me, that there is not a single line, as it is now published, which stands in conformity with the original manuscript. The truth is, every sentiment has its peculiar expression, and every word its precise place, which do not always immediately present themselves, and generally demand frequent trials before they can be properly adjusted ; not to mention the more important difficulties, which necessarily occur in settling the plan, and regulating the higher parts which compose the structure of a finished work.

Those, indeed, who know what pangs it costs even the most fertile genius to be delivered of a just and regular production, might be inclined, perhaps, to cry out, with the most ancient of authors, " Oh ! that mine adversary had written a book ! " A writer of refined taste has the continual mortification to find himself incapable of taking entire possession of that ideal beauty, which warms and fills his imagination. His conceptions still rise above all the powers of his art ; and he can but faintly copy out those images of perfection, which are impressed upon his mind. Never was any thing, says Tully, more beautiful than the Venus of Apelles, or the Jove of Phidias : yet were they by no means equal to those high notions of beauty which animated the geniuses of those wonderful artists. In the same manner, he observes, the great masters of oratory imaged to themselves a certain perfection

of eloquence, which they could only contemplate in idea, but in vain attempted to draw out in expression. Perhaps no author ever perpetuated his reputation, who could write up to the full standard of his own judgment : and I am persuaded that he, who, upon a survey of his compositions, can, with entire complacency, pronounce them good, will hardly find the world join with him in the same favourable sentence.

The most judicious of all poets, the inimitable Virgil, used to resemble his productions to those of that animal, who, agreeably to the notions of the ancients, was supposed to bring her young into the world, a mere rude and shapeless mass : he was obliged to retouch them again and again, he acknowledged, before they acquired their proper form and beauty. Accordingly, we are told, that after having spent eleven years in composing his *Æneid*, he intended to have set apart three more for the revisal of that glorious performance. But being prevented, by his last sickness, from giving those finishing touches, which his exquisite judgment conceived to be still necessary, he directed his friends *Tucca* and *Varius* to burn the noblest poem that ever appeared in the Roman language. In the same spirit of delicacy, *Mr. Dryden* tells us, that, had he taken more time in translating this author, he might, possibly, have succeeded better ; but never, he assures us, could he have succeeded so well as to have satisfied himself.

In a word, *Hortensius*, I agree with you, that there is nothing more difficult than to fill up the character of an author, who proposes to raise a just

and lasting admiration ; who is not contented with those little transient flashes of applause which attend the ordinary race of writers, but considers only how he may shine out to posterity : who extends his views beyond the present generation, and cultivates those productions which are to flourish in future ages. What sir William Temple observes of poetry, may be applied to every other work where taste and imagination are concerned. “ It requires the greatest contraries to compose it ; a genius both penetrating and solid ; an expression both strong and delicate. There must be a great agitation of mind to invent, a great calm to judge and correct : there must be, upon the same tree, and at the same time, both flower and fruit.” But though I know you would not value yourself upon any performance, wherein these very opposite and very singular qualities were not conspicuous ; yet, I must remind you, at the same time, that when the file ceases to polish, it must necessarily weaken. You will remember, therefore, that there is a medium between the immoderate caution of that orator, who was three olympiads in writing a single oration, and the extravagant expedition of that poet, whose funeral pile was composed of his own numberless productions. Adieu, I am, &c.

LX. TO PALEMON.

May 28, 1739.

I WRITE this while Cleora is angling by my side, under the shade of a spreading elm, that hangs over the banks of our river. A nightingale, more har-

monious even than Strada's, is serenading us from a hawthorn bush, which smiles with all the gaiety of youth and beauty; while

gentle gales,
Fanning their odoriferous wings, dispense
Native perfumes, and whisper whence they stole
Those balmy spoils.—*Milton.*

Whilst I am thus enjoying the innocent luxury of this vernal delight, I look back upon those scenes of turbulence, wherein I was once engaged, with more than ordinary distaste; and despise myself for ever having entertained so mean a thought as to be rich and great. One of our monarchs used to say, “that he looked upon those to be the happiest men in the nation, whose fortune had placed them in the country, above a high-constable, and below the trouble of a justice of peace.” It is in a mediocrity of this happy kind that I here pass my life: with a fortune far above the necessity of engaging in the drudgery of business, and with desires much too humble to have any relish for the splendid baits of ambition.

You must not, however, imagine that I affect the Stoic, or pretend to have eradicated all my passions: the sum of my philosophy amounts to no more than to cherish none but such as I may easily and innocently gratify, and to banish all the rest as so many bold intruders upon my repose. I endeavour to practise the maxim of a French poet, by considering every thing that is not within my possession, as not worth having:

pour m' assurer le seul bien
Que l' on doit estimer au monde,
Tout ce que je n' ai pas je le compte pour rien.

Is it not possible, Palemon, to reconcile you to these unaspiring sentiments, and to lower your flight to the humble level of genuine happiness? Let me, at least, prevail with you, to spare a day or two from the *certamina divitiarum* (as Horace I think calls them,) from those splendid contests in which you are engaged, just to take a view of the sort of life we lead in the country. If there is any thing wanting to complete the happiness I here find, it is that you are so seldom a witness to it. Adieu. I am, &c.

LXI. TO EUPHRONIUS.

July 3, 1744.

THE beauties of style seem to be generally considered as below the attention both of an author and a reader. I know not, therefore, whether I may venture to acknowledge, that, among the numberless graces of your late performance, I particularly admired that strength and elegance, with which you have enforced and adorned the noblest sentiments.

There was a time, however, (and it was a period of the truest refinements) when an excellence of this kind was esteemed in the number of the politest accomplishments; as it was the ambition of some of the greatest names of antiquity to distinguish themselves in the improvements of their na-

tive tongue. Julius Cæsar, who was not only the greatest hero, but the finest gentleman, that ever, perhaps, appeared in the world, was desirous of adding this talent to his other most shining endowments ; and, we are told, he studied the language of his country with much application, as we are sure he possessed it in its highest elegance. What a loss, Euphronius, is it to the literary world, that the treatise which he wrote upon this subject is perished with many other valuable works of that age ! But though we are deprived of the benefit of his observations, we are happily not without an instance of their effects ; and his own memoirs will ever remain as the best and brightest exemplar not only of true generalship, but of fine writing. He published them, indeed, only as materials for the use of those who should be disposed to enlarge upon that remarkable period of the Roman story ; yet the purity and gracefulness of his style were such, that no judicious writer durst attempt to touch the subject after him.

Having produced so illustrious an instance in favour of an art for which I have ventured to admire you, it would be impertinent to add a second, were I to cite a less authority than that of the immortal Tully. This noble author, in his dialogue concerning the celebrated Roman orators, frequently mentions it as a very high encomium, that they possessed the elegance of their native language ; and introduces Brutus as declaring, that he should prefer the honour of being esteemed the great master and improver of Roman eloquence, even to the glory of many triumphs.

But to add reason to precedent, and to view this art in its use as well as its dignity, will it not be allowed of some importance, when it is considered, that eloquence is one of the most considerable auxiliaries of truth? Nothing, indeed, contributes more to subdue the mind to the force of reason, than her being supported by the powerful assistance of masculine and vigorous oratory; as, on the contrary, the most legitimate arguments may be disappointed of that success they deserve, by being attended with a spiritless and enfeebled expression. Accordingly, that most elegant of writers, the inimitable Mr. Addison, observes, in one of his essays, that “there is as much difference between comprehending a thought clothed in Cicero’s language, and that of an ordinary writer, as between seeing an object by the light of a taper and the light of the sun.”

It is surely then a very strange conceit of the celebrated Malebranche, who seems to think the pleasure which arises from perusing a well-written piece, is of the criminal kind, and has its source in the weakness and effeminacy of the human heart. A man must have a very uncommon severity of temper indeed, who can find any thing to condemn in adding charms to truth, and gaining the heart by captivating the ear: in uniting roses with the thorns of science, and joining pleasure with instruction.

The truth is, the mind is delighted with a fine style, upon the same principle that it prefers regularity to confusion, and beauty to deformity. A taste of this sort is, indeed, so far from being a

mark of any depravity of our nature, that I should rather consider it as an evidence, in some degree, of the moral rectitude of its constitution; as it is a proof of its retaining some relish, at least, of harmony and order.

One might be apt, indeed, to suspect, that certain writers amongst us had considered all beauties of this sort in the same gloomy view with Malebranche: or, at least, that they avoided every refinement in style, as unworthy a lover of truth and philosophy. Their sentiments are sunk by the lowest expressions, and seem condemned to the first curse, of "creeping upon the ground all the days of their life." Others, on the contrary, mistake pomp for dignity; and, in order to raise their expressions above vulgar language, lift them up beyond common apprehensions; esteeming it (one should imagine) a mark of their genius, that it requires some ingenuity to penetrate their meaning. But how few writers, like Euphronius, know to hit that true medium which lies between those distant extremes! How seldom do we meet with an author whose expressions, like those of my friend, are glowing, but not glaring; whose metaphors are natural, but not common; whose periods are harmonious, but not poetical; in a word, whose sentiments are well set, and shown to the understanding in their truest and most advantageous lustre! I am, &c.

LXII. TO ORONTES.

I INTENDED to have closed with your proposal, and passed a few weeks with you at * * * ; but some unlucky affairs have intervened, which will engage me, I fear, the remaining part of the season.

Among the amusements which the scene you are in affords, I should have esteemed the conversation of Timoclea as a very principal entertainment ; and as I know you are fond of singular characters, I recommend that lady to your acquaintance.

Timoclea was once a beauty ; but ill health, and worse fortune, have ruined those charms, which time would have yet spared. However, what has spoiled her for a mistress, has improved her as a companion : and she is far more conversable now, as she has much less beauty, than when I used to see her once a week triumphing in the drawing-room. For, as few women (whatever they may pretend) will value themselves upon their minds, while they can gain admirers by their persons, Timoclea never thought of charming by her wit, till she had no chance of making conquests by her beauty. She has seen a good deal of the world, and of the best company in it, as it is from thence she has derived whatever knowledge she possesses. You cannot, indeed, flatter her more, than by seeming to consider her as fond of reading and retirement. But the truth is, nature formed her for the joys of society ; and she is never so thoroughly pleased as when she has a circle round her.

It is upon those occasions she appears to full ad-

vantage; as I never knew any person who was endowed with the talents for conversation to a higher degree. If I were disposed to write the characters of the age, Timoclea is the first person in the world to whose assistance I should apply. She has the happiest art of marking out the distinguishing cast of her acquaintance, that I ever met with; and I have known her, in an afternoon's conversation, paint the manners with greater delicacy of judgment and strength of colouring than is to be found either in Theophrastus or Bruyere.

She has an inexhaustible fund of wit; but if I may venture to distinguish, where one knows not even how to define, I should say it is rather brilliant than strong. This talent renders her the terror of all her female acquaintance; yet she never sacrificed the absent, or mortified the present, merely for the sake of displaying the force of her satire; if any feel its sting, it is those only who first provoke it. Still, however, it must be owned, that her resentments are frequently without just foundation, and almost always beyond measure. But though she has much warmth, she has great generosity in her temper; and, with all her faults, she is well worth your knowing.

And now having given you this general plan of the strength and weakness of the place, I leave you to make your approaches as you shall see proper. I am, &c.

LXIII. TO THE SAME.

I LOOK upon verbal criticism, as it is generally exercised, to be no better than a sort of learned legerdemain, by which the sense or nonsense of a passage is artfully conveyed away, and some other introduced in its stead, as best suits with the purpose of the profound juggler. The dissertation you recommended to my perusal has but served to confirm me in these sentiments: for though I admired the ingenuity of the artist, I could not but greatly suspect the justness of an art, which can thus press any author into the service of any hypothesis.

I have sometimes amused myself with considering the entertainment it would afford to those ancients, whose works have had the honour to be attended by our commentators, could they rise out of their sepulchres, and peruse some of those curious conjectures, that have been raised upon their respective compositions. Were Horace, for instance, to read over only a few of those numberless restorers of his text, and expositors of his meaning, that have infested the republic of letters,—what a fund of pleasantry might he extract for a satire on critical erudition! How many harmless words would he see cruelly banished from their rightful possessions, merely because they happened to disturb some unmerciful philologist! On the other hand, he would, undoubtedly, smile at that penetrating sagacity, which has discovered meanings which never entered into his thoughts, and found out con-

cealed allusions in his most plain and artless expressions.

One could not, I think, set the general absurdity of critical conjectures in a stronger light, than by applying them to something parallel in our own writers. If the English tongue should ever become a dead language, and our best authors be raised into the rank of classic writers, much of the force and propriety of their expressions, especially of such as turned upon humour, or alluded to any manners peculiar to the age, would inevitably be lost, or at best, would be extremely doubtful. How would it puzzle, for instance, future commentators to explain Swift's epigram upon our musical contests! I imagine one might find them descanting upon that little humorous sally of our English Rabelais, in some such manner as this:

EPIGRAM ON THE FEUDS BETWEEN HANDEL AND
BONONCINI.

Strange all this difference should be
'Twixt Tweedle-dum and Tweedle-dee!

NOTES OF VARIOUS AUTHORS.

“*Tweedle-dum and Tweedle-dee.*] I am persuaded the poet gave it *Twiddle drum* and *Twiddle key*. To *twiddle* signifies to make a certain ridiculous motion with the fingers; what word, therefore, could be more proper to express this epigram writer's contempt of the performances of those musicians, and of the folly of his contemporaries in

running into parties upon so absurd an occasion? The *drum* was a certain martial instrument used in those times; as the word *key* is a technical term in music, importing the fundamental note which regulates the whole composition. It means, also, those little pieces of wood which the fingers strike against in an organ, &c. in order to make the instrument sound. The alteration here proposed, is so obvious and natural, that I am surprised none of the commentators hit upon it before. *L. C. D.*"

"*Tweedle-dum and Tweedle-dee.*] These words have greatly embarrassed the critics, who are extremely expert in finding a difficulty where there is none. *Tweedle-dum* and *Tweedle-dee* are, most undoubtedly, the names of the two musicians; and though they are styled by different appellations in the title of this epigram, yet that is no objection; for it is well known, that persons, in those times, had more surnames than one. *S. M.*" "Absurd! here is evidently an error of the press, for there is not a single hint in all antiquity of the family of the *Tweedle-dums* and *Tweedle-dees*. The learned *S. M.* therefore, nodded when he undertook to explain this passage. The sense will be very plain, if we read, with a small alteration, *Wheedle-Tom*, and *Waddle-The*; *The* being a known contraction for Theodore, as *Tom* is for Thomas. *Waddle* and *Wheedle* are likewise classical words. Thus Pope:

"As when a dab-chick *waddles* through the copse."

Dun. ii. 59.

"Obliquely *waddling* to the mark in view."

Ib. ii. 150.

“ And though, indeed, I do not recollect to have met with the verb *to wheedle* in any pure author, yet it is plain that it was in use, since we find the participle *wheedling* in an ancient tragedy composed about these times :

“ A laughing, toying, *wheedling*, whimpering she,
Will make him amble on a gossip's message,
And hold the distaff with a hand as patient
As e'er did Hercules.” *Jane Shore.*

“ *Thomas* and *Theodore*, therefore, were, most certainly, the Christian names of these two musicians, to the contractions of which the words *wheedle* and *waddle* are added as characteristical of the persons and dispositions of the men; the former implying that *Tom* was a mean sycophant, and the latter, that *The* had an awkward and ridiculous gait. *F. J. Z.*”

I know not, Orontes, how I shall escape your satire, for venturing to be thus free with a science which is sometimes, I think, admitted into a share of your meditations: yet, tell me honestly, is not this a faithful specimen of the spirit and talents of the general class of critic-writers? Far am I, however, from thinking irreverently of those useful members of the republic of letters, who, with modesty and proper diffidence, have offered their assistance in throwing a light upon obscure passages in ancient authors. Even when this spirit breaks out in its highest pride and petulance of reformation, if it confines itself to classical inquiries, I can be contented with treating it only as an object of ridicule. But I must confess, when I find it, with an assured

and confident air, supporting religious or political doctrines upon the very uncertain foundation of various readings, forced analogies, and precarious conjectures, it is not without some difficulty I can suppress my indignation. Farewell. I am, &c.

LXIV. TO PHILOTES.

Tunbridge, Aug. 4.

I THINK I promised you a letter from this place: yet have nothing more material to write than that I got safe hither. To any other man I should make an apology for troubling him with an information so trivial: but among true friends there is nothing indifferent; and what would seem of no consequence to others, has, in intercourses of this nature, its weight and value. A by-stander, unacquainted with play, may fancy, perhaps, that the counters are of no more worth than they appear; but those who are engaged in the game, know they are to be considered at a higher rate. You see I draw my allusions from the scene before me; a propriety which the critics, I think, upon some occasions, recommend.

I have often wondered what odd whim could first induce the healthy to follow the sick into places of this sort, and lay the scene of their diversions amidst the most wretched part of our species: one should imagine an hospital the last spot in the world to which those who are in pursuit of pleasure would think of resorting. However, so it is, and by this means the company here furnish out a tragi-comedy of the most singular kind. While

some are literally dying, others are expiring in metaphor; and, in one scene, you are presented with the real, and, in another, with the fantastical pains of mankind. An ignorant spectator might be apt to suspect, that each party was endeavouring to qualify itself for acting in the opposite character: for the infirm cannot labour more earnestly to recover the strength they have lost, than the robust to dissipate that which they possess. Thus the diseased pass not more anxious nights in their beds, than the healthy at the hazard-tables; and I frequently see a game at quadrille occasion as severe disquietudes as a fit of the gout. As for myself, I perform a sort of middle part in this motley drama; and am sometimes disposed to join with the invalids in envying the healthy, and sometimes have spirits enough to mix with the gay in pitying the splenetic.

The truth is, I have found some benefit by the waters; but I shall not be so sanguine as to pronounce with certainty of their effects, till I see how they enable me to pass through the approaching winter. That season, you know, is the time of trial with me; and if I get over the next with more ease than the last, I shall think myself obliged to celebrate the nymph of these springs in grateful sonnet.

But let times and seasons operate as they may, there is one part of me over which they will have no power: and in all the changes of this uncertain constitution, my heart will ever continue fixed and firmly yours. I am, &c.

LXV. TO ORONTES.

May 6, 1735.

LET others consider you for those ample possessions you enjoy: suffer me to say, that it is your application of them alone which renders either them or you valuable in my estimation. Your splendid roofs and elegant accommodations I can view without the least emotion of envy: but when I observe you in full power of exerting the noble purposes of your exalted generosity—it is then, I confess, I am apt to reflect, with some regret, on the humbler supplies of my own more limited finances. *Nihil habet* (to speak of you in the same language that the first of orators addressed the greatest of emperors) *fortuna tua majus, quam ut possis; nec natura melius, quam ut velis, servare quamplurimos*. To be able to soften the calamities of mankind, and inspire gladness into a heart oppressed with want, is, indeed, the noblest privilege of an enlarged fortune: but to exercise that privilege in all its generous refinements, is an instance of the most uncommon elegance, both of temper and understanding.

In the ordinary dispensations of bounty, little address is required: but when it is to be applied to those of a superior rank and more elevated mind, there is as much charity discovered in the manner as in the measure of one's benevolence. It is something extremely mortifying to a well-formed spirit, to see itself considered as an object of compassion; as it is the part of improved humanity to humour this honest pride in our nature, and to relieve the

necessities without offending the delicacy of the distressed.

I have seen charity (if charity it might be called) insult with an air of pity, and wound at the same time that it healed. But I have seen, too, the highest munificence dispensed with the most refined tenderness, and a bounty conferred with as much address as the most artful would employ in soliciting one. Suffer me, Orontes, upon this single occasion, to gratify my own inclinations in violence to yours, by pointing out the particular instance I have in my view; and allow me, at the same time, to join my acknowledgments with those of the unfortunate person I recommended to your protection, for the generous assistance you lately afforded him. I am, &c.

LXVI. TO CLEORA.

Sep. 5, 1737.

SHALL I own to you that I cannot repent of an offence which occasioned so agreeable a reproof? A censure, conveyed in such genteel terms, charms more than corrects, and tempts rather than reforms. I am sure, at least, though I should regret the crime, I shall always admire the rebuke, and long to kiss the hand that chasteneth in so pleasing a manner. However, I shall, for the future, strictly pursue your orders; and have sent you, in this second parcel, no other books than what my own library supplied. Among these, you will find a collection of letters: I do not recommend them to you, having never read them; nor, indeed, am I ac-

quainted with their characters; but they presented themselves to my hands, as I was tumbling over some others; so I threw them in with the rest, and gave them a chance of adding to your amusement. I wish I could meet with any thing that had even the least probability of contributing to mine. But,

forlorn of thee,

Whither shall I betake me, where subsist?—*Milton.*

Time, that reconciles one to most things, has not been able to render your absence, in any degree, less uneasy to me. I may rather be said to haunt the house in which I live, than to make one of the family. I walk in and out of the rooms like a restless spirit: for I never speak till I am spoken to, and then generally answer, like Banquo's ghost in *Macbeth*, with a deep sigh, and a nod. Thus abstracted from every thing about me, I am yet quite ruined for a hermit; and find no more satisfaction in retirement than you do in the company of * * *.

How often do I wish myself in possession of that famous ring you were mentioning the other day, which had the property of rendering those who wore it invisible! I would rather be master of this wonderful *unique*, than of the kingdom which Gyges gained by means of it; as I might then attend you, like your guardian angel, without censure or obstruction. How agreeable would it be to break out upon you, like *Æneas* from his cloud, where you least expected me; and join again the

dear companion of my fortunes, in spite of that relentless power, who has raised so many cruel storms to destroy us! But whilst I employed this extraordinary ring to these and a thousand other pleasing purposes, you would have nothing to apprehend from my being invested with such an invisible faculty. That innocence which guards and adorns my Cleora in her most gay and public hours, attends her, I well know, in her most private and retired ones; and she, who always acts under the eye of the Best of Beings, has nothing to fear from the secret inspection of any mortal. Adieu. I am, &c.

LXVII. TO EUPHRONIUS.

May 5, 1743.

IF you received the first account of my loss from other hands than mine, you must impute it to the dejection of mind into which that accident threw me. The blow, indeed, fell with too much severity, to leave me capable of recollecting myself enough to write to you immediately; as there cannot, perhaps, be a greater shock to a breast of any sensibility, than to see its earliest and most valuable connexions irreparably broken; than to find itself for ever torn from the first and most endeared object of its highest veneration. At least, the affection and esteem I bore to that excellent parent, were founded upon so many and such uncommon motives, that his death has given me occasion to lament not only a most tender father, but a most valuable friend.

That I can no longer enjoy the benefit of his

animating example, is one among the many aggravating circumstances of my affliction ; and I often apply to myself, what an excellent ancient has said upon a similar occasion, *Vereor ne nunc negligentius vivam*. There is nothing, in truth, puts us so much upon our guard, as to act under the constant inspection of one, whose virtues, as well as years, have rendered venerable. Never, indeed, did the dignity of goodness appear more irresistible in any man : yet there was something, at the same time, so gentle in his manners, such an innocence and cheerfulness in his conversation, that he was as sure to gain affection as to inspire reverence.

It has been observed (and I think by Cowley) “ That a man in much business, must either make himself a knave, or the world will make him a fool.” If there is any truth in this observation, it is not, however, without an exception. My father was early engaged in the great scenes of business, where he continued almost to his very last hour ; yet he preserved his integrity firm and unbroken through all those powerful assaults he must necessarily have encountered in so long a course of action.

If it were justice, indeed, to his other virtues, to single out any particular one, as shining with superior lustre to the rest, I should point to his probity as the brightest part of his character. But the truth is, the whole tenor of his conduct was one uniform exercise of every moral quality that can adorn and exalt human nature. To defend the injured, to relieve the indigent, to protect the distressed, was the chief end and aim of all his endeavours ; and his principal motive both for engaging

and persevering in his profession, was, to enable himself more abundantly to gratify so glorious an ambition.

No man had a higher relish of the pleasures of retired and contemplative life ; as none was more qualified to enter into those calm scenes with greater ease and dignity. He had nothing to make him desirous of flying from the reflections of his own mind, nor any passions which his moderate patrimony would not have been more than sufficient to have gratified. But to live for himself only, was not consistent with his generous and enlarged sentiments. It was a spirit of benevolence that led him into the active scenes of the world ; which, upon any other principle, he would either never have entered, or soon have renounced. And it was that godlike spirit which conducted and supported him through his useful progress, to the honour and interest of his family and friends, and to the benefit of every creature that could possibly be comprehended within the extensive circle of his beneficence.

I well know, my dear Euphronius, the high regard you pay to every character of merit in general, and the esteem in which you held this most valuable man in particular. I am sure, therefore, you would not forgive me, were I to make an apology for leaving with you this private monument of my veneration for a parent, whose least and lowest claim to my gratitude and esteem is, that I am indebted to him for my birth. Adieu. I am, &c.

LXVIII. TO PHILOTES.

I AM particularly pleased with a passage in Homer, wherein Jupiter is represented as taking off his eyes, with a sort of satiety, from the horror of the field of battle, and relieving himself with a view of the Hippomolgi, a people famous, it seems, for their innocence and simplicity of manners. It is in order to practise the same kind of experiment, and give myself a short remission from that scene of turbulence and contention in which I am engaged, that I now turn my thoughts on you, Philotes, whose temperance and moderation may well justify me in calling you a modern Hippomolgian.

I forget which of the ancients it is, that recommends this method of thinking over the virtues of one's acquaintance: but I am sure it is sometimes necessary to do so, in order to keep one's self in humour with our species, and preserve the spirit of philanthropy from being entirely extinguished. Those who frequent the ambitious walks of life, are apt to take their estimate of mankind from the small part of it that lies before them, and consider the rest of the world as practising, in different and under parts, the same treachery and dissimulation which mark out the characters of their superiors. It is difficult, indeed, to preserve the mind from falling into a general contempt of our race, whilst one is conversant with the worst part of it. I labour, however, as much as possible, to guard against that ungenerous disposition; as nothing is so apt to kill those seeds of benevolence, which

every man should endeavour to cultivate in his breast.

Ill, surely, therefore, have those wits employed their talents, who have made our species the object of their satire, and affected to subdue the vanity, by derogating from the virtues of the human heart. But it will be found, I believe, upon an impartial examination, that there is more folly than malice in our natures, and that mankind oftener act wrong through ignorance than design. Perhaps, the true measure of human merit is neither to be taken from the histories of former times, nor from what passes in the more striking scenes of the present generation. The greatest virtues have, probably, been ever the most obscure; and, I am persuaded, in all ages of the world, more genuine heroism has been overlooked and unknown, than either recorded or observed. That *aliquid divinum*, as Tully calls it, that celestial spark, which every man who coolly contemplates his own mind may discover within him, operates where we least look for it; and often raises the noblest productions of virtue in the shade and obscurity of life.

But it is time to quit speculation for action, and return to the common affairs of the world. I shall certainly do so with more advantage, by keeping Philotes still in my view; as I shall enter into the interests of mankind with more alacrity, by thus considering the virtues of his honest heart as less singular than I am sometimes inclined to suppose. Adieu. I am, &c.

LXIX. TO THE SAME.

Aug. 3, 1735.

LET it not be any discouragement to you, Philotes, that you have hitherto received but little satisfaction from those noble speculations wherein you are employed. “Truth (to use the expression of the excellent Mr. Wollaston) is the offspring of unbroken meditations, and of thoughts often revised and corrected.” It requires, indeed, great patience and resolution to dissipate that cloud of darkness which surrounds her; or (if you will allow me to go to an old philosopher for my allusion) to draw her up from that profound well in which she lies concealed.

There is, however, such a general connexion in the operations of nature, that the discovery even of a single truth, opens the way to numberless others; and when once the mind has hit upon a right scent, she cannot wholly pursue her inquiries in vain.

—canes ut montivagæ persæpe feraï
 Naribus inveniunt intectas fronde quietes,
 Cum semel institerint vestigia certa viaï;
 Sic aliud ex alio per te tute ipse videre
 —in rebus poteris, cæcasque latebras
 Insinuare omnes, et verum protrahere inde.—*Lucret.*

It must be owned, nevertheless, that after having exerted all our sagacity and industry, we shall scarce arrive at certainty in many speculative

truths. Providence does not seem to have intended that we should ever be in possession of demonstrative knowledge, beyond a very limited compass; though, at the same time, it cannot be supposed, without the highest injustice to the benevolent Author of our natures, that he has left any necessary truths without evident notes of distinction. But while the powers of the mind are thus limited in their extent, and greatly fallible, likewise, in their operations, is it not amazing, Philotes, that mankind should insult each other for difference in opinion, and treat every notion that opposes their own, with obloquy and contempt? Is it not amazing that a creature, with talents so precarious and circumscribed, should usurp that confidence which can only belong to much superior beings, and claim a deference which is due to perfection alone? Surely, the greatest arrogance that ever entered into the human heart, is that which not only pretends to be positive itself, in points wherein the best and wisest have disagreed, but looks down with all the insolent superiority of contemptuous pity on those whose impartial reasonings have led them into opposite conclusions.

There is nothing, perhaps, more evident, than that our intellectual faculties are not formed by one general standard; and, consequently, that diversity of opinion is of the very essence of our natures. It seems probable that this disparity extends even to our sensitive powers: and though we agree, indeed, in giving the same names to certain visible appearances,—as whiteness, for instance, to snow,—yet it is by no means demonstration, that the

particular body which affects us with that sensation, raises the same precise idea in any two persons who shall happen to contemplate it together. Thus I have often heard you mention your youngest daughter as being the exact counterpart of her mother: now she does not appear to me to resemble her in any single feature. To what can this disagreement in our judgments be owing, but to a difference in the structure of our organs of sight? Yet as justly, Philotes, might you disclaim me for your friend, and look upon me with contempt for not discovering a similitude which appears so evident to your eyes, as any man can abuse or despise another for not apprehending the force of that argument which carries conviction to his own understanding.

Happy had it been for the peace of the world, if our maintainers of systems, either in religion or politics, had conducted their several debates with the full impression of this truth upon their minds! Genuine philosophy is ever, indeed, the least dogmatical; and I am always inclined to suspect the force of that argument which is obtruded with arrogance and sufficiency.

I am wonderfully pleased with a passage I met with the other day, in the preface to Mr. Boyle's Philosophical Essays: and would recommend that cautious spirit, by which he professes to have conducted himself in his physical researches, as worthy the imitation of inquirers after truth of every kind.

“Perhaps you will wonder,” says he, “that in almost every one of the following essays, I should

use so often, *perhaps, it seems, it is not improbable*, as argue a diffidence of the truth of the opinions I incline to; and that I should be so shy of laying down principles, and sometimes of so much as venturing at explications. But I must freely confess, that having met with many things of which I could give myself no one probable cause, and some things of which several causes may be assigned, so differing as not to agree in any thing, unless in their being, all of them, probable enough, I have often found such difficulties in searching into the causes and manner of things, and I am so sensible of my own disability to surmount those difficulties, that I dare speak confidently and positively of very few things, except matter of fact. And when I venture to deliver any thing by way of opinion, I should, if it were not for mere shame, speak yet more diffidently than I have been wont to do. Nor have my thoughts been altogether idle—in forming notions, and attempting to devise hypotheses. But I have hitherto (though not always, yet not unfrequently) found, that what pleased me for a while, was soon after disgraced by some farther or new experiment. And, indeed, I have the less envied many (for I say not *all*) of those writers, who have taken upon them to deliver the causes of things, and explicate the mysteries of nature; since I have had an opportunity to observe how many of their doctrines after having been, for a while, applauded, and even admired, have afterwards been confuted by some new phænomenon in nature, which was either unknown to such writers, or not sufficiently considered by them."

If positiveness could become any man, in any point of mere speculation, it must have been this truly noble philosopher, when he was delivering the result of his studies in a science, wherein, by the united confession of the whole world, he so eminently excelled. But he had too much generosity to prescribe his own notions as a measure to the judgment of others, and too much good sense to assert them with heat or confidence.

Whoever, Philotes, pursues his speculations with this humble, unarrogating temper of mind, and with the best exertion of those faculties which Providence has assigned him, though he should not find the conviction, never, surely, can he fail of the reward of truth. I am, &c.

LXX. TO PALAMEDES.

If malice had never broke loose upon the world, till it seized your reputation, I might reasonably condole with you on falling the first prey to its unrestrained rage. But this spectre has haunted merit almost from its earliest existence: and when all mankind were as yet included within a single family, one of them, we know, rose up in malignity of soul against his innocent brother. Virtue, it should seem, therefore, has now been too long acquainted with this her constant persecutor, to be either terrified or dejected at an appearance so common. The truth of it is, she must either renounce her noblest theatre of action, and seclude herself in cells and deserts, or be contented to enter upon the stage of the world with this fiend in her train.

She cannot triumph, if she will not be traduced ; and she should consider the clamours of censure, when joined with her own conscious applause, as so many acclamations that confirm her victory.

Let those who harbour this worst of human dispositions consider the many wretched and contemptible circumstances which attend it : but it is the business of him who unjustly suffers from it, to reflect how it may be turned to his advantage. Remember, then, my friend, that Generosity would lose half her dignity, if Malice did not contribute to her elevation ; and he that has never been injured, has never had it in his power to exercise the noblest privilege of heroic virtue. There is another consolation which may be derived from the rancour of the world, as it will instruct one in a piece of knowledge of the most singular benefit in our progress through it : it will teach us to distinguish genuine friendship from counterfeit. For he only who is warmed with the real flame of amity, will rise up to support his single negative, in opposition to the clamorous votes of an undistinguishing multitude.

He, indeed, who can see a cool and deliberate injury done to his friend, without feeling himself wounded in his most sensible part, has never known the force of the most generous of all the human affections. Every man, who has not taken the sacred name of friendship in vain, will subscribe to those sentiments which Homer puts into the mouth of Achilles, and which Mr. Pope has opened and enlarged with such inimitable strength and spirit :

A generous friendship no cold medium knows,
Burns with one love, with one resentment glows:
One should our interests and our passions be;
My friend must hate the man that injures me. ix. 609.

It may greatly also allay the pain which attends the wounds of defamation, and which are always most severely felt by those who least deserve them, to reflect, that though Malice generally flings the first stone, it is Folly and Ignorance, it is Indolence or Irresolution, which are principally concerned in swelling the heap. When the tide of censure runs strongly against any particular character, the generality of mankind are too careless or too impotent to withstand the current; and thus, without any particular malice in their own natures, are often indolently carried along with others, by tamely falling in with the general stream. The number of those who really mean one harm, will wonderfully lessen after the deductions which may fairly be made of this sort: and the cup of unjust reproach must surely lose much of its bitterness, where one is persuaded that Malevolence has the least share in mingling the draught. For nothing, perhaps, stings a generous mind more sensibly in wrongs of this sort, than to consider them as evidences of a general malignity in human nature. But, from whatever causes these storms may arise, Virtue would not be true to her own native privileges, if she suffered herself to sink under them. It is from that strength and firmness, which upright intentions will ever secure to an honest mind, that Palamedes, I am persuaded, will stand superior to those unmerited reproaches which assault his cha-

racter, and preserve an unbroken repose amidst the little noise and strife of ignorant or malicious tongues. Farewell. I am, &c.

LXXI. TO PHILOTES.

April 9, 1740.

THERE is no advantage which attends a popular genius, that I am so much inclined to envy, as the privilege of rendering merit conspicuous. An author who has raised the attention of the public to his productions, and gained a whole nation for his audience, may be considered as guardian of the temple of Fame, and invested with the prerogative of giving entrance to whomsoever he deems worthy of that glorious distinction. But the praise of an ordinary writer obstructs rather than advances the honour due to merit, and sullies the lustre it means to celebrate. Impotent panegyric operates like a blight wherever it falls, and injures all that it touches. Accordingly, Henry the IVth of France, was wont humorously to ascribe his early gray hairs to the effect of numberless wretched compliments which were paid him by a certain ridiculous orator of his times. But though the wreaths of folly should not disgrace the temple they surround, they wither, at least, as soon as received; and if they should not be offensive, most certainly, however, they will be transient. Whereas those, on the contrary, with which an Horace or a Boileau, an Addison or a Pope, have crowned the virtues of their contemporaries, are as permanent as they are illustrious, and will preserve their colours and fragrance to remotest ages.

If I could thus weave the garlands of unfading applause,—if I were in the number of those chosen spirits, whose approbation is fame,—your friend should not want that distinguishing tribute which his virtues deserve, and you request. I would tell the world, (and tell it in a voice that should be heard far, and remembered long) that Eusebes, with all the knowledge and experience of these later ages, has all the innocence and simplicity of the earliest: that he enforces the doctrines of his sacred function, not with the vain pomp of ostentatious eloquence, but with the far more powerful persuasion of active and exemplary virtue: that he softens the severity of precept with the ease and familiarity of conversation; and, by generously mingling with the meanest committed to his care, insinuates the instructor under the air of the companion: that, whilst he thus fills up the circle of his private station, he still turns his regards to the public, and employs his genius, his industry, and his fortune, in prosecuting and perfecting those discoveries, which tend most to the general benefit of mankind: in a word, that whilst others of his order are contending for the ambitious prizes of ecclesiastical dignities, it is his glorious pre-eminence to merit the highest, without enjoying or soliciting even the lowest. This, and yet more than this, the world should hear of your friend, if the world were inclined to listen to my voice. But though you, perhaps, Philotes, may be willing to give audience to my Muse,

namque tu solebas
Meas aliquid putare nugas.—*Catul.*

can she hope to find favour, likewise, in the sight of the public? Let me, then, rather content myself with the silent admiration of those virtues, which I am not worthy to celebrate; and leave it to others to place the good works of Eusebes, where they may “shine forth before men.” I am, &c.

LXXII. TO THE SAME.

Dec. 7, 1737.

THE visits of a friend, like those of the sun at this season, are extremely enlivening. I am sure, at least, they would both be particularly acceptable to me at present, when my mind is as much overcast as the heavens. I hope, therefore, you will not drop the design your letter intimates, of spending a few days with me, in your way to ***. Your company will greatly contribute to disperse those clouds of melancholy which the loss of a very valuable friend has hung over me. There is something, indeed, in the first moments of separation from those whom a daily commerce and long habitude of friendship has grafted upon the heart, that disorders our whole frame of thought and discolours all one's enjoyments. Let Philosophy assist with the utmost of her vaunted strength, the mind cannot immediately recover the firmness of its posture, when those amicable props, upon which it used to rest, are totally removed. Even the most indifferent objects with which we have long been familiar, take some kind of root in our hearts: and “I should hardly care” (as a celebrated author has with great good nature observed) “to

have an old post pulled up, which I remembered ever since I was a child."

To know how to receive the full satisfaction of a present enjoyment, with a disposition prepared at the same time to yield it up without reluctance, is hardly, I doubt, reconcileable to humanity: pain, in being disunited from those we love, is a tax we must be contented to pay, if we would enjoy the pleasures of the social affections. One would not wish, indeed, to be wholly insensible to disquietudes of this kind; and we must renounce the most refined relish of our being, if we would, upon all occasions, possess our souls in a stoical tranquillity.

That ancient philosopher, whose precept it was, to converse with our friends as if they might one day prove our enemies, has been justly censured as advancing a very ungenerous maxim. To remember, however, that we must one day most certainly be divided from them, is a reflection, methinks, that should enter with us into our tender connexions of every kind. From the present discomposure, therefore, of my own breast, and from that share which I take in whatever may affect the repose of yours, I cannot bid you adieu, without reminding you, at the same time, of the useful caution of one of your poetical acquaintance:

Quicquid amas, cupias non placuisse nimis.

I am, &c.

LXXIII. TO PALAMEDES.

Feb. 13, 1741.

IF one would rate any particular merit according to its true valuation, it may be necessary, perhaps, to consider how far it can be justly claimed by mankind in general. I am sure, at least, when I read the very uncommon sentiments of your last letter, I found their judicious author rise in my esteem, by reflecting, that there is not a more singular character in the world than that of a thinking man. It is not merely having a succession of ideas which lightly skim over the mind, that can with any propriety be styled by that denomination. It is observing them separately and distinctly, and ranging them under their respective classes; it is calmly and steadily viewing our opinions on every side, and resolutely tracing them through all their consequences and connexions, that constitutes the man of reflection, and distinguishes reason from fancy. Providence, indeed, does not seem to have formed any very considerable number of our species for an extensive exercise of this higher faculty: as the thoughts of the far greater part of mankind are necessarily restrained within the ordinary purposes of animal life. But even if we look up to those who move in much superior orbits, and who have opportunities to improve, as well as leisure to exercise their understandings, we shall find that thinking is one of the least exerted privileges of cultivated humanity.

It is, indeed, an operation of the mind which

meets with many obstructions to check its just and free direction ; but there are two principles which prevail more or less in the constitutions of most men, that particularly contribute to keep this faculty of the soul unemployed : I mean pride and indolence. To descend to truth through the tedious progression of well-examined deductions, is considered as a reproach to the quickness of understanding ; as it is much too laborious a method for any but those who are possessed of a vigorous and resolute activity of mind. For this reason, the greater part of our species generally choose either to seize upon their conclusions at once, or to take them by rebound from others, as best suiting with their vanity or their laziness. Accordingly Mr. Locke observes, that there are not so many errors and wrong opinions in the world as is generally imagined. Not that he thinks mankind are by any means uniform in embracing truth ; but because the majority of them, he maintains, have no thought or opinion at all about those doctrines concerning which they raise the greatest clamour. Like the common soldiers in an army, they follow where their leaders direct, without knowing or even inquiring into the cause for which they so warmly contend.

This will account for the slow steps by which truth has advanced in the world, on one side ; and for those absurd systems which, at different periods, have had an universal currency on the other. For there is a strange disposition in human nature, either blindly to tread the same paths that have been traversed by others, or to strike out into the

most devious extravagances : the greater part of the world will either totally renounce their reason, or reason only from the wild suggestions of a heated imagination.

From the same source may be derived those divisions and animosities which break the union both of public and private societies, and turn the peace and harmony of human intercourse into dissonance and contention. For while men judge and act by such measures as have not been proved by the standard of dispassionate reason, they must equally be mistaken in their estimates both of their own conduct and that of others.

If we turn our view from active to contemplative life, we may have occasion, perhaps, to remark, that thinking is no less uncommon in the literary than the civil world. The number of those writers who can, with any justness of expression, be termed thinking authors, would not form a very copious library, though one were to take in all of that kind which both ancient and modern times have produced. Necessarily, I imagine, must one exclude from a collection of this sort, all critics, commentators, modern Latin poets, translators, and, in short, all that numerous under-tribe in the commonwealth of literature, that owe their existence merely to the thoughts of others. I should reject, for the same reason, such compilers as Valerius Maximus and Aulus Gellius : though it must be owned, indeed, their works have acquired an accidental value, as they preserve to us several curious traces of antiquity, which time would otherwise have entirely worn out. Those teeming ge-

niuses, likewise, who have propagated the fruits of their studies through a long series of tracts, would have little pretence, I believe, to be admitted as writers of reflection. For this reason, I cannot regret the loss of those incredible numbers of compositions which some of the ancients are said to have produced :

Quale fuit Cassi rapido ferventius amni
Ingenium; capsis quem fama est esse librisque
Ambustum propriis. Horace.

Thus Epicurus, we are told, left behind him three hundred volumes of his own works, wherein he had not inserted a single quotation; and we have it upon the authority of Varro's own words,* that he himself composed four hundred and ninety books. Seneca assures us, that Didymus, the grammarian, wrote no less than four thousand; but Origen, it seems, was yet more prolific, and extended his performances even to six thousand treatises. It is obvious to imagine with what sort of materials the productions of such expeditious workmen were wrought up: sound thought and

* This passage is to be found in Aul. Gellius, who quotes it from a treatise which Varro had written concerning the wonderful effects of the number seven. But the subject of this piece cannot be more ridiculous than the style in which it appears to have been composed: for that most learned author of his times (as Cicero, if I mistake not, somewhere calls him) informed his readers in that performance, *se jam duodecimam annorum hebdomadam ingressum esse, et ad eum diem septuaginta hebdomadas librorum conscripsisse.*—Aul. Gell. iii. 10.

well-matured reflections could have no share, we may be sure, in these hasty performances. Thus are books multiplied, whilst authors are scarce; and so much easier is it to write than to think! But shall I not myself, Palamedes, prove an instance that it is so, if I suspend, any longer, your own more important reflections, by interrupting you with such as mine? Adieu. I am, &c.

LXXIV. TO ORONTES.

IT is with much pleasure I look back upon that philosophical week which I lately enjoyed at * * * ; as there is no part, perhaps, of social life, which affords more real satisfaction, than those hours which one passes in rational and unreserved conversation. The free communication of sentiments amongst a set of ingenious and speculative friends, such as those you gave me the opportunity of meeting, throws the mind into the most advantageous exercise, and shows the strength or weakness of its opinions with greater force of conviction, than any other method we can employ.

That "it is not good for man to be alone," is true in more views of our species than one; and society gives strength to our reason, as well as polish to our manners. The soul, when left entirely to her own solitary contemplations, is insensibly drawn by a sort of constitutional bias, which generally leads her opinions to the side of her inclinations. Hence it is that she contracts those peculiarities of reasoning, and little habits of thinking, which so often confirm her in the most fantastical errors,

But nothing is more likely to recover the mind from this false bent, than the counter-warmth of impartial debate. Conversation opens our views, and gives our faculties a more vigorous play; it puts us upon turning our notions on every side, and holds them up to a light that discovers those latent flaws, which would, probably, have lain concealed in the gloom of unagitated abstraction. Accordingly, one may remark, that most of those wild doctrines which have been let loose upon the world, have generally owed their birth to persons whose circumstances or dispositions have given them the fewest opportunities of canvassing their respective systems, in the way of free and friendly debate. Had the authors of many an extravagant hypothesis discussed their principles in private circles, ere they had given vent to them in public, the observation of Varro had never, perhaps, been made (or never, at least, with so much justice) that "there is no opinion so absurd, but has some philosopher or other to produce in its support."

Upon this principle, I imagine, it is, that some of the finest pieces of antiquity are written in the dialogue manner. Plato and Tully, it should seem, thought truth could never be examined with more advantage, than amidst the amicable opposition of well-regulated converse. It is probable, indeed, that subjects of a serious and philosophical kind were more frequently the topics of Greek and Roman conversations, than they are of ours; as the circumstances of the world had not yet given occasion to those prudential reasons, which may now, perhaps, restrain a more free exchange of senti-

ments amongst us. There was something, likewise, in the very scenes themselves where they usually assembled, that almost unavoidably turned the stream of their conversations into this useful channel. Their rooms and gardens were generally adorned, you know, with the statues of the greatest masters of reason that had then appeared in the world; and while Socrates or Aristotle stood in their view, it is no wonder their discourse fell upon those subjects, which such animating representations would naturally suggest. It is probable, therefore, that many of those ancient pieces which are drawn up in the dialogue manner, were no imaginary conversations invented by their authors, but faithful transcripts from real life: and it is this circumstance, perhaps, as much as any other, which contributes to give them that remarkable advantage over the generality of modern compositions, which have been formed upon the same plan. I am sure, at least, I could scarce name more than three or four of this kind, which have appeared in our language, worthy of notice. My lord Shaftesbury's dialogue, entitled, "The Moralists;" Mr. Addison's upon Ancient Coins; Mr. Spence's upon the Odyssey; together with those of my very ingenious friend Philemon to Hydaspes, are almost the only productions, in this way, which have hitherto come forth amongst us with advantage. These, indeed, are all master-pieces of the kind, and written in the true spirit of learning and politeness. The conversation in each of these most elegant performances is conducted not in the usual absurd method of introducing one disputant to be

tamely silenced by the other, but in the more lively dramatic manner, where a just contrast of characters is preserved throughout, and where the several speakers support their respective sentiments with all the strength and spirit of a well-bred opposition.

But of all the conversation pieces, whether ancient or modern, either of the moral or polite kind, I know not one which is more elegantly written than the little anonymous dialogue concerning the rise and decline of eloquence among the Romans: I call it anonymous, though I am sensible it has been ascribed not only to Tacitus and Quintillian, but even to Suetonius. The reasons, however, which the critics have respectively produced, are so exceedingly precarious and inconclusive, that one must have a very extraordinary share of classical faith indeed, to receive it as the performance of any of those celebrated writers. It is evidently, however, a composition of that period in which they flourished; and, if I were disposed to indulge a conjecture, I should be inclined to give it to the younger Pliny. It exactly coincides with his age; it is addressed to one of his particular friends and correspondents; it is marked with some similar expressions and sentiments. But, as arguments of this kind are always more imposing than solid, I recommend it to you as a piece, concerning the author of which nothing satisfactory can be collected. This I may, one day or other, perhaps, attempt to prove in form, as I have amused myself with giving it an English dress. In the mean time, I have enclosed my translation in this packet; not only with

a view to your sentiments, but in return to your favour. I was persuaded I could not make you a better acknowledgment for the pleasure of that conversation which I lately participated through your means, than by introducing you to one, which (if my copy is not extremely injurious to its original) I am sure, you cannot attend to without equal entertainment and advantage. Adieu. I am, &c.

A DIALOGUE CONCERNING ORATORY.*.

TO FABIVS.

You have frequently, my friend, required me to assign a reason, whence it has happened, that the oratorical character, which spread such a glorious lustre upon former ages, is now so totally extinct among us, as scarce to preserve even its name. It is the ancients alone, you observed, whom we distinguish with that appellation; while the eloquent of the present times are styled only pleaders, patrons, advocates, or any thing, in short, but orators.

Hardly, I believe, should I have attempted a solution of your difficulty, or ventured upon the ex-

* It is necessary to inform those readers of the following dialogue who may be disposed to compare it with the original, that the edition of Heumannus, printed at Gottingen, 1719, has been generally followed.

amination of a question, wherein the genius of the moderns, if they cannot, or their judgment, if they will not rise to the same heights, must necessarily be given up; had I nothing of greater authority to offer upon the subject, than my own particular sentiments. But having been present, in the very early part of my life, at a conversation between some persons of great eloquence, considering the age in which they lived, who discussed this very point; my memory, and not my judgment, will be concerned, whilst I endeavour, in their own style and manner, and according to the regular course of their debate, to lay before you the several reasonings of those celebrated geniuses: each of them, indeed, agreeably to the peculiar turn and character of the speaker, alleging different, though probable causes of the same fact; but all of them supporting their respective sentiments with ingenuity and good sense. Nor were the orators of the present age without an advocate in this debate: for one of the company took the opposite side, and, treating the ancients with much severity and contempt, declared in favour of modern eloquence.

Marcus Aper and Julius Secundus, two distinguished geniuses of our forum, made a visit to Maternus the day after he had publicly recited his tragedy of Cato: a piece, which gave, it seems, great offence to those in power, and was much canvassed in all conversations. Maternus, indeed, seemed, throughout that whole performance, to have considered only what was suitable to the character of his hero, without paying a proper regard to those prudential restraints which were neces-

sary for his own security. I was, at that time, a warm admirer and constant follower of those great men; insomuch, that I not only attended them when they were engaged in the courts of judicature; but, from my fond attachment to the arts of eloquence, and with a certain ardency peculiar to youth, I joined in all their parties, and was present at their most private conversations. Their great abilities, however, could not secure them from the critics. They alleged, that Secundus had by no means an easy elocution; whilst Aper, they pretended, owed his reputation as an orator more to nature than to art. It is certain, nevertheless, that their objections were without foundation. The speeches of the former were always delivered with sufficient fluency; and his expression was clear, though concise: as the latter had, most undoubtedly, a general tincture of literature. The truth is, one could not so properly say he was without, as above the assistance of learning. He imagined, perhaps, the powers and application of his genius would be so much the more admired, as it should not appear to derive any of its lustre from the acquired arts.

We found Maternus, when we entered his apartment, with the tragedy in his hand which he had recited the day before. "Are you then," said Secundus, addressing himself to him, "so little discouraged with the malicious insinuations of these ill-natured censures, as still to cherish this obnoxious tragedy of yours? Or, perhaps, you are revising it, in order to expunge the exceptionable passages; and purpose to send your Cato into the

world, I will not say with superior charms, but, at least, with greater security than in its original form?" "You may peruse it," returned he, "if you please; you will find it remains just in the same situation as when you heard it read. I intend, however, that Thyestes shall supply the defects of Cato: for I am meditating a tragedy upon that subject, and have already, indeed, formed the plan. I am hastening, therefore, the publication of this play in my hand, that I may apply myself entirely to my new design." "Are you then, in good earnest," replied Aper, "so enamoured of dramatic poetry, as to renounce the business of oratory in order to consecrate your whole leisure to—Medea, I think, it was before, and now, it seems, Thyestes? when the causes of so many worthy friends, the interests of so many powerful communities, demand you in the forum: a task more than sufficient to employ your attention, though neither Cato nor Domitius had any share of it; though you were not continually turning from one dramatic performance to another, and adding the tales of Greece to the history of Rome."

"I should be concerned," answered Maternus, "at the severity of your rebuke, if the frequency of our debates, upon this subject, had not rendered it somewhat familiar to me. But how," added he, smiling, "can you accuse me of deserting the business of my profession, when I am every day engaged in defending poetry against your accusations? And I am glad," continued he, looking towards Secundus, "that we have now an opportunity of discussing this point before so competent a judge. His

decision will either determine me to renounce all pretensions to poetry for the future, or, which I rather hope, will be a sanction for my quitting that confined species of oratory, in which, methinks, I have sufficiently laboured, and authorise the devoting myself to the more enlarged and sacred eloquence of the Muses."

"Give me leave," interposed Secundus, "before Aper takes exception to his judge, to say, what all honest ones usually do in the same circumstances, that I desire to be excused from sitting in judgment upon a cause, wherein I must acknowledge myself biassed in favour of a party concerned. All the world is sensible of that strict friendship which has long subsisted between me and that excellent man, as well as great poet, Saleius Bassus. To which let me add, if the Muses are to be arraigned, I know of none who can offer more prevailing bribes."

"I have nothing to allege against Bassus," returned Aper, "or any other man, who, not having talents for the bar, chooses to establish a reputation of the poetical kind. Nor shall I suffer Maternus (for I am willing to join issue with him before you) to evade my charge, by drawing others into his party. My accusation is levelled singly against him; who, formed as he is, by nature, with a most masculine and truly oratorical genius, chooses to suffer so noble a faculty to lie waste and uncultivated. I must remind him, however, that, by the exercise of this commanding talent, he might, at once, both acquire and support the most important friendships, and have the glory to see whole provinces

and nations rank themselves under his patronage; a talent, of all others, the most advantageous, whether considered with respect to interest or to honours; a talent, in short, that affords the most illustrious means of propagating a reputation, not only within our own walls, but throughout the whole compass of the Roman empire, and, indeed, to the most distant nations of the globe.

“ If utility ought to be the governing motive of every action and every design of our lives: can we possibly be employed to better purpose, than in the exercise of an art, which enables a man, upon all occasions, to support the interest of his friend, to protect the rights of the stranger, to defend the cause of the injured? that not only renders him the terror of his open and secret adversaries, but secures him, as it were, by the most firm and permanent guard?

“ The particular usefulness, indeed, of this profession is evidently manifested in the opportunities it supplies of serving others, though we should have no occasion to exert it in our own behalf: but should we upon any occurrence be ourselves attacked, the sword and buckler is not a more powerful defence in the day of battle, than oratory in the dangerous season of public arraignment. What had Marcellus lately to oppose to the united resentment of the whole senate, but his eloquence? Yet, supported by that formidable auxiliary, he stood firm and unmoved, amidst all the assaults of the artful Helvidius; who, notwithstanding he was a man of sense and elocution, was totally inexpert in the management of this sort of contests. But I

need not insist farther on this head; well persuaded, as I am, that Maternus will not controvert so clear a truth. Rather let me observe the pleasure which attends the exercise of the persuasive art: a pleasure which does not arise only once, perhaps, in a whole life, but flows in a perpetual series of gratifications. What can be more agreeable to a liberal and ingenuous mind, formed with a relish of rational enjoyments, than to see one's levee crowded with a concourse of the most illustrious personages, not as followers of your interest or your power; not because you are rich, and destitute of heirs; but singly in consideration of your superior qualifications. It is not unusual, upon these occasions, to observe the wealthy, the powerful, and the childless, addressing themselves to a young man (and probably no rich one) in favour of themselves or their friends. Tell me now, has authority or wealth a charm equal to the satisfaction of thus beholding persons of the highest dignity, venerable by their age, or powerful by their credit, in the full enjoyment of every external advantage, courting your assistance, and tacitly acknowledging that, great and distinguished as they are, there is something still wanting to them more valuable than all their possessions? Represent to yourself the honourable crowd of clients conducting the orator from his house, and attending him in his return; think of the glorious appearance he makes in public, the distinguishing respect that is paid to him in the courts of judicature, the exultation of heart when he rises up before a full audience, hushed in solemn silence and fixed attention, pressing round

the admired speaker, and receiving every passion he deems proper to raise! Yet these are but the ordinary joys of eloquence, and visible to every common observer. There are others, and those far superior, of a more concealed and delicate kind, and of which the orator himself can alone be sensible. Does he stand forth prepared with a studied harangue? As the composition, so the pleasure, in this instance, is more solid and equal. If, on the other hand, he rises in a new and unexpected debate, the previous solicitude, which he feels upon such occasions, recommends and improves the pleasure of his success; as, indeed, the most exquisite satisfaction of this kind is, when he boldly hazards the unpremeditated speech. For it is in the productions of genius, as in the fruits of the earth; those which arise spontaneously are ever the most agreeable. If I may venture to mention myself, I must acknowledge, that neither the satisfaction I received when I was first invested with the laticlave, nor even when I entered upon the several high posts in the state; though the pleasure was heightened to me, not only as those honours were new to my family, but as I was born in a city by no means favourable to my pretensions: the warm transports, I say, which I felt at those times, were far inferior to the joy which has glowed in my breast, when I have successfully exerted my humble talents in defence of those causes and clients committed to my care. To say truth, I imagined myself, at such seasons, to be raised above the highest dignities, and in the possession of something far more valuable, than either the favour of the great or the bounty of the wealthy can ever bestow.

“ Of all the arts or sciences, there is no one which crowns its votaries with a reputation in any degree comparable to that of eloquence. It is not only those of a more exalted rank in the state, who are witnesses of the orator's fame ; it is extended to the observation even of our very youth of any hopes of merit. Whose example, for instance, do parents more frequently recommend to their sons ? Or who are more the gaze and admiration of the people in general ? Whilst every stranger that arrives, is curious of seeing the man, of whose character he has heard such honourable report. I will venture to affirm that Marcellus, whom I just now mentioned, and Vibius (for I choose to produce my instances from modern times, rather than from those more remote) are as well known in the most distant corners of the empire, as they are at Capua or Vercellæ, the places, it is said, of their respective nativity : an honour for which they are by no means indebted to their immense riches. On the contrary, their wealth may justly, it should seem, be ascribed to their eloquence. Every age, indeed, can produce persons of genius, who, by means of this powerful talent, have raised themselves to the most exalted station. But the instances I just now mentioned, are not drawn from distant times : they fall within the observation of our own eyes. Now the more obscure the original extraction of those illustrious persons was, the more humble the patrimony to which they were born, so much stronger proof they afford of the great advantage of the oratorical arts. Accordingly, without the recommendation of family or fortune, without any thing very extraordinary in

their virtues, (and one of them rather contemptible in his address) they have, for many years, maintained the highest credit and authority among their fellow-citizens. Thus, from being chiefs in the forum, where they preserved their distinguished eminence as long as they thought proper, they have passed on to the enjoyment of the same high rank in Vespasian's favour, whose esteem for them seems to be mixed even with a degree of reverence, as indeed they both support and conduct the whole weight of his administration. That excellent and venerable prince (whose singular character it is, that he can endure to hear truth) well knows that the rest of his favourites are distinguished only as they are the objects of his munificence; the supplies of which he can easily raise and with the same facility confer on others. Whereas Crispus and Marcellus recommended themselves to his notice, by advantages which no earthly potentate either did or could bestow. The truth of it is, inscriptions and statues, and ensigns of dignity, could claim but the lowest rank, amidst their more illustrious distinctions. Not that they are unpossessed of honours of this kind, any more than they are destitute of wealth or power; advantages much oftener affectedly depreciated, than sincerely despised.

“ Such, my friends, are the ornaments, and such the rewards of an early application to the business of the forum, and the arts of oratory! But poetry, to which Maternus wishes to devote his days (for it was that which gave rise to our debate) confers neither dignity to her followers in

particular, nor advantage to society in general. The whole amount of her pretensions is nothing more than the transient pleasure of a vain and fruitless applause. Perhaps what I have already said, and am going to add, may not be very agreeable to my friend Maternus; however, I will venture to ask him, what avails the eloquence of his Jason or Agamemnon? What mortal does it either defend or oblige? Who is it that courts the patronage, or joins the train of Bassus, that ingenious (or if you think the term more honourable,) that illustrious poet? Eminent as he may be, if his friend, his relation, or himself, were involved in any litigated transactions, he would be under the necessity of having recourse to Secundus, or, perhaps, to you, my friend;* but by no means, however, as you are a poet, and in order to solicit you to bestow some verses upon him: for verses he can compose himself, fair, it seems, and goodly. Yet, after all, when he has, at the cost of much time, and many a laboured lucubration, spun out a single canto, he is obliged to traverse the whole town in order to collect an audience. Nor can he procure even this compliment, slight as it is, without actually purchasing it: for the hiring a room, erecting a stage, and dispersing his tickets, are articles which must necessarily be attended with some expense. And let us suppose his poem is approved: the whole admiration is over in a day or two, like that of a fine flower which dies away without producing any fruit. In a word, it secures

* Maternus.

to him neither friend nor patron, nor confers even the most inconsiderable favour upon a single creature. The whole amount of his humble gains is the fleeting pleasure of a clamorous applause! We looked upon it, lately, as an uncommon instance of generosity in Vespasian, that he presented Bassus with fifty thousand sesterces.* Honourable, I grant, it is, to possess a genius which merits the imperial bounty: but how much more glorious (if a man's circumstances will admit of it) to exhibit in one's own person an example of munificence and liberality? Let it be remembered, likewise, if you would succeed in your poetical labours, and produce any thing of real worth, in that art, you must retire, as the poets express themselves,

To silent grottos and sequester'd groves :

that is, you must renounce the conversation of your friends, and every civil duty of life, to be concealed in gloomy and unprofitable solitude.

“ If we consider the votaries of this idle art with respect to fame, that single recompense which they pretend to derive, or, indeed, to seek, from their studies, we shall find they do not, by any means, enjoy an equal proportion of it with the sons of oratory. For even the best poets fall within the notice of but a very small proportion of mankind: whilst indifferent ones are universally disregarded. Tell me, Maternus, did ever the reputation of the most approved rehearsal of the

* About four hundred pounds of our money.

poetical kind reach the cognizance even of half the town ; much less extend itself to distant provinces ? Did ever any foreigner, upon his arrival here, inquire after Bassus ? or if he did, it was merely as he would after a picture or a statue ; just to look upon him, and pass on. I would in no sort be understood as discouraging the pursuit of poetry in those who have no talents for oratory ; if happily they can, by that means, amuse their leisure, and establish a just character. I look upon every species of eloquence as venerable and sacred ; and prefer her, in whatever guise she may think proper to appear, before any other of her sister-arts ; not only, Maternus, when she exhibits herself in your chosen favourite, the solemn tragedy, or lofty heroic, but even in the pleasant lyric, the wanton elegy, the severe iambic, the witty epigram, or, in one word, in whatever other habit she is pleased to assume. But (I repeat it again) my complaint is levelled singly against you ; who, designed as you are, by nature, for the most exalted rank of eloquence, choose to desert your station, and deviate into a lower order. Had you been endued with the athletic vigour of Nicostratus, and born in Greece, where acts of that sort are esteemed not unworthy of the most refined characters ; as I could not patiently have suffered that uncommon strength of arm, formed for the nobler combat, to have idly spent itself in throwing the javelin, or tossing the quoit ; so I now call you forth from rehearsals and theatres, to the forum, and business, and high debate ; especially, since you cannot urge the same plea for engaging in poetry which is now

generally alleged, that it is less liable to give offence than oratory. For the ardency of your genius has already flamed forth, and you have incurred the displeasure of our superiors: not, indeed, for the sake of a friend; that would have been far less dangerous; but in support truly of Cato! Nor can you offer in excuse either the duty of your profession, justice to your client, or the unguarded heat of debate. You fixed, it should seem, upon this illustrious and popular subject with deliberate design, and as a character that would give weight and authority to your sentiments. You will reply (I am aware) 'it was that very circumstance which gained you such universal applause, and rendered you the general topic of discourse.' Talk no more, then, I beseech you, of security and repose, whilst you thus industriously raise up to yourself so potent an adversary. For my own part, at least, I am contented with engaging in questions of a more modern and private nature; wherein, if in defence of a friend, I am under a necessity of taking liberties unacceptable, perhaps, to my superiors, the honest freedom of my zeal will, I trust, not only be excused, but applauded."

Aper having delivered this with his usual warmth and earnestness, "I am prepared," replied Maternus, in a milder tone, and with an air of pleasantry, "to draw up a charge against the orators, no less copious than my friend's panegyric in their behalf. I suspected, indeed, he would turn out of his road, in order to attack the poets: though I must own, at the same time, he has somewhat softened the severity of his satire, by certain concessions he is pleased to make in their favour. He is willing, I

perceive, to allow those whose genius does not point to oratory, to apply themselves to poetry. Nevertheless, I do not scruple to acknowledge, that, with some talents, perhaps, for the forum, I choose to build my reputation on dramatic poetry. The first attempt I made for this purpose was by exposing the dangerous power of Vatinius: a power which even Nero himself disapproved, and which that infamous favourite abused, to the profanation of the sacred Muses. And I am persuaded, if I enjoy any share of fame, it is to poetry, rather than to oratory, that I am indebted for the acquisition. It is my fixed purpose, therefore, entirely to withdraw myself from the fatigue of the bar. I am by no means ambitious of that splendid concourse of clients, which Aper has represented in such pompous colours, any more than I am of those sculptured honours which he mentioned; though, I must confess, they have made their way into my family, notwithstanding my inclinations to the contrary. Innocence is, now at least, a surer guard than eloquence; and I am in no apprehension I shall ever have occasion to open my lips in the senate, unless, perhaps, in defence of a friend.

“ Woods, and groves, and solitude, the objects of Aper's invective, afford me, I will own to him, the most exquisite satisfaction. Accordingly, I esteem it one of the great privileges of poetry, that it is not carried on in the noise and tumult of the world, amidst the painful importunity of anxious suitors, and the affecting tears of distressed criminals. On the contrary, a mind enamoured of the Muses, retires into scenes of innocence and repose, and enjoys the sacred haunts of silence and

contemplation. Here genuine Eloquence received her birth, and here she fixed her sacred and sequestered habitation. 'Twas here, in decent and becoming garb, she recommended herself to the early notice of mortals, inspiring the breasts of the blameless and the good : here first the voice divine of oracles was heard. But she of modern growth, offspring of lucre and contention, was born in evil days, and employed (as Aper very justly expresses it) instead of weapon : whilst happier times, or, in the language of the Muses, the golden age, free alike from orators and from crimes, abounded with inspired poets, who exerted their noble talents, not in defending the guilty, but in celebrating the good. Accordingly, no character was ever more eminently distinguished, or more augustly honoured : first by the gods themselves, to whom the poets were supposed to serve as ministers at their feasts, and messengers of their high behests ; and afterwards by that sacred offspring of the gods, the first venerable race of legislators. In that glorious list we read the names, not of orators, indeed, but of Orpheus and Linus, or, if we are inclined to trace the illustrious roll still higher, even of Apollo himself.

“ But these, perhaps, will be treated by Aper as heroes of romance. He cannot, however, deny, that Homer has received as signal honours from posterity as Demosthenes ; or that the fame of Sophocles or Euripides is as extensive as that of Lysias or Hyperides ; that Cicero's merit is less universally confessed than Virgil's ; or that not one of the compositions of Asinius or Messalla is in so much request as the *Medea* of Ovid, or the *Thyestes*

of Varius. I will advance even farther, and venture to compare the unenvied fortune, and happy self-converse of the poet, with the anxious and busy life of the orator; notwithstanding the hazardous contentions of the latter may possibly raise him even to the consular dignity. Far more desirable, in my estimation, was the calm retreat of Virgil: where yet he lived not unhonoured by his prince, nor unregarded by the world. If the truth of either of these assertions should be questioned, the letters of Augustus will witness the former; as the latter is evident from the conduct of the whole Roman people, who, when some verses of that divine poet were repeated in the theatre, where he happened to be present, rose up to a man, and saluted him with the same respect that they would have paid to Augustus himself. But, to mention our own times, I would ask whether Secundus Pomponius is any thing inferior, either in dignity of life, or solidity of reputation, to Afer Domitius? As to Crispus or Marcellus, to whom Aper refers me for an animating example, what is there in their present exalted fortunes really desirable? Is it that they pass their whole lives either in being alarmed for themselves, or in striking terror into others? Is it that they are daily under a necessity of courting the very men they hate; that, holding their dignities by unmanly adulation, their masters never think them sufficiently slaves, nor the people sufficiently free? And, after all, what is this their so much envied power? Nothing more, in truth, than what many a paltry freed-man has frequently enjoyed. But—
'Me let the lovely Muses lead,' as Virgil sings, 'to silent groves and heavenly-haunted streams, remote

from business and from care; and still superior to the painful necessity of acting in wretched opposition to my better heart. Nor let me more, with anxious steps and dangerous, pursue pale Fame amidst the noisy forum! May never clamorous suitors, nor panting freed-man with officious haste, awake my peaceful slumbers! Uncertain of futurity, and equally unconcerned, never may I bribe the favour of the great; by rich bequests to avarice insatiate; nor, accumulation vain! amass more wealth than I may transfer as inclination prompts, whenever shall arrive my life's last fatal period: and then, not in horrid guise of mournful pomp, but crowned with chaplets gay, may I be entombed; nor let a friend, with unavailing zeal, solicit the useful tribute of postumous memorials!"

Maternus had scarce finished these words, which he uttered with great emotion, and with an air of inspiration, when Messalla entered the room; who, observing much attention in our countenances, and imagining the conversation turned upon something of more than ordinary import: "Perhaps," said he, "you are engaged in a consultation; and, I doubt, I am guilty of an unseasonable interruption."—"By no means," answered Secundus: "on the contrary, I wish you had given us your company sooner; for I am persuaded, you would have been extremely entertained. Our friend Aper has, with great eloquence, been exhorting Maternus, to turn the whole strength of his genius and his studies, to the business of the forum; while Maternus, on the other hand, agreeably to the character of one who was pleading the cause of the Muses, has defended

his favourite art with a boldness and elevation of style more suitable to a poet than an orator."

"It would have afforded me infinite pleasure," replied Messalla, "to have been present at a debate of this kind. And I cannot but express my satisfaction, in finding the most eminent orators of our times, not confining their geniuses to points relating to their profession; but canvassing such other topics, in their conversation, as give a very advantageous exercise to their faculties, at the same time that it furnishes an entertainment of the most instructive kind, not only to themselves, but to those who have the privilege of being joined in their party. And, believe me, Secundus, the world received, with much approbation, your history of J. Asiaticus, as an earnest that you intend to publish more pieces of the same nature. On the other side," continued he, with an air of irony, "it is observed, with equal satisfaction, that Aper has not yet bid adieu to the questions of the schools, but employs his leisure rather after the example of the modern rhetoricians, than of the ancient orators."

"I perceive," returned Aper, "that you continue to treat the moderns with your usual derision and contempt, while the ancients alone are in full possession of your esteem. It is a maxim, indeed, I have frequently heard you advance, (and, allow me to say, with much injustice to yourself, and to your brother) that there is no such thing in the present age as an orator. This you are the less scrupulous to maintain, as you imagine it cannot be imputed to a spirit of envy; since you are willing,

at the same time, to exclude yourself from a character, which every body else is inclined to give you."

"I have, hitherto," replied Messalla, "found no reason to change my opinion, and I am persuaded, that even you yourself, Aper, (whatever you may sometimes affect to the contrary,) as well as my other two friends here, join with me in the same sentiments. I should, indeed, be glad, if any of you would discuss this matter, and account for so remarkable a disparity, which I have often endeavoured in my own thoughts. And what to some appears a satisfactory solution of this phænomenon, to me, I confess, heightens the difficulty: for I find the very same difference prevails among the Grecian orators; and that the priest Nicetes, together with others of the Ephesian and Mitylenean schools, who humbly content themselves with raising the acclamations of their tasteless auditors, deviate much farther from Æschines or Demosthenes, than you, my friends, from Tully or Asinius."

"The question you have started," said Secundus, "is a very important one, and well worthy of consideration. But who so capable of doing justice to it as yourself? who, besides the advantages of a fine genius and great literature, have given, it seems, particular attention to this inquiry."—"I am very willing," answered Messalla, "to lay before you my thoughts upon the subject, provided you will assist me with yours as I go along."—"I will engage for two of us," replied Maternus: "Secundus and myself will speak to such points as you shall, I do not say omit, but think proper to leave

us. As for Aper, you just now informed us, it is usual with him to dissent from you in this article: and, indeed, I see he is already preparing to oppose us, and will not look with indifference upon this our association in support of the ancients."

"Undoubtedly," returned Aper, "I shall not tamely suffer the moderns to be condemned, unheard and undefended. But first, let me ask, whom is it you call ancients? What age of orators do you distinguish by that designation? The word always suggests to me a Nestor, or an Ulysses, men who lived above a thousand years since; whereas, you seem to apply it to Demosthenes and Hyperides, who, it is agreed, flourished so late as the times of Philip and Alexander, and, indeed, survived them. It appears, from hence, that there is not much above four hundred years distance between our age and that of Demosthenes: a portion of time, which, considered with respect to human duration, appears, I acknowledge, extremely long: but, if compared with that immense æra which the philosophers talk of, is exceedingly contracted, and seems, almost, but of yesterday. For if it be true what Cicero observes in his treatise inscribed to Hortensius, that the great and genuine year is that period in which the heavenly bodies return to the same position wherein they were placed when they first began their respective orbits; and this revolution contains 12,954 of our solar years; then Demosthenes, this ancient Demosthenes of yours, lived in the same year, or rather, I might say in the same month, with ourselves. But to mention the Roman orators: I presume, you will scarcely prefer

Menenius Agrippa (who may, with some propriety, indeed, be called an ancient) to the men of eloquence among the moderns. It is Cicero, then, I suppose, together with Cœlius, Cæsar, and Calvus, Brutus, Asinius, and Messalla, to whom you give this honourable precedence: yet I am at a loss to assign a reason, why these should be deemed ancients rather than moderns. To instance in Cicero: he was killed, as his freedman Tiro informs us, on the 26th of December, in the consulship of Hirtius and Pansa, in which year, Augustus and Pedius succeeded them in that dignity. Now, if we take fifty-six years for the reign of Augustus, and add twenty-three for that of Tiberius, about four for that of Caius, fourteen apiece for Claudius and Nero, one for Galba, Otho, and Vitellius, together with the six that our present excellent prince* has enjoyed the empire, we shall have about one hundred and twenty years from the death of Cicero to these times: a period to which it is not impossible that a man's life may extend. I remember, when I was in Britain, to have met with an old soldier, who assured me, he had served in the army which opposed Cæsar's descent upon that island. If we suppose this person, by being taken prisoner, or by any other means, to have been brought to Rome, he

* From this passage Fabricius asserts, that this dialogue was written in the 6th year of Vespasian's reign; but he evidently mistakes the time in which the scene of it is laid, for that in which it was composed. It is upon arguments not better founded, that the critics have given Tacitus and Quintilian the honour of this elegant performance.—*Vid. Fabric. Bib. Lat.* v. i. 559.

might have heard Cæsar and Cicero, and, likewise, any of our contemporaries. I appeal to yourselves, whether, at the last public donative, there were not several of the populace who acknowledged they had received the same bounty, more than once, from the hands of Augustus? It is evident, therefore, that these people might have been present at the pleadings both of Corvinus and Asinius: for Corvinus was alive in the middle of the reign of Augustus, and Asinius towards the latter end. Surely, then, you will not split a century, and call one orator an ancient, and another a modern, when the very same person might be an auditor of both; and thus, as it were, render them contemporaries.

“The conclusion I mean to draw from this observation is, that whatever advantages these orators might derive to their characters, from the period of time in which they flourished, the same will extend to us; and, indeed, with much more reason than to S. Galba, or to C. Carbonius. It cannot be denied that the compositions of these last are very inelegant and unpolished performances; as I could wish, that not only your admired Calvus and Cœlius, but I will venture to add too, even Cicero himself (for I shall deliver my sentiments with great freedom) had not considered them as the proper models of their imitation. Suffer me to premise, however, as I go along, that eloquence changes its qualities as it runs through different ages. Thus, as Gracchus, for instance, is much more copious and florid than old Cato, so Crassus rises into a far higher strain of politeness and refinement than Gracchus. Thus, likewise, as the speeches of Tully

are more regular, and marked with superior elegance and sublimity than those of the two orators last mentioned; so Corvinus is considerably more smooth and harmonious in his periods, as well as more correct in his language, than Tully. I am not considering which of them is most eloquent: all I endeavour to prove at present, is, that oratory does not manifest itself in one uniform figure, but is exhibited by the ancients under a variety of different appearances. However, it is by no means a just way of reasoning, to infer, that one thing must necessarily be worse than another, merely because it is not the same. Yet such is the unaccountable perversity of human nature, that whatever has antiquity to boast, is sure to be admired, as every thing novel is certainly disapproved. There are critics, I doubt not, to be found, who prefer even Appius Cæcus to Cato; as it is well known that Cicero had his censurers, who objected that his style was swelling and redundant, and by no means agreeable to the elegant conciseness of Attic eloquence. You have certainly read the letters of Calvus and Brutus to Cicero. It appears, by those epistolary collections, that Cicero considered Calvus as a dry, unanimated orator, at the same time that he thought the style of Brutus negligent and unconnected. These, in their turn, had their objections, it seems, to Cicero: Calvus condemned his oratorical compositions, for being weak and enervated; as Brutus (to use his own expression) esteemed them feeble and disjointed. If I were to give my opinion, I should say, they each spoke truth of one another. But I shall examine these

orators, separately, hereafter; my present design is, only to consider them in a general view.

“ The admirers of antiquity are agreed, I think, in extending the æra of the ancients as far as Cassius Severus, whom they assert to have been the first that struck out from the plain and simple manner which, till then, prevailed. Now I affirm, that he did so, not from any deficiency in point of genius or learning, but from his superior judgment and good sense. He saw it was necessary to accommodate oratory, as I observed before, to the different times and taste of the audience. Our ancestors, indeed, might be contented (and it was a mark of their ignorance and want of politeness that they were so) with the immoderate and tedious length of speeches, which was in vogue in those ages; as, in truth, to be able to harangue for a whole day together, was itself looked upon, at that illiterate period, as a talent worthy of the highest admiration. The immeasurable introduction, the circumstantial detail, the endless division and subdivision, the formal argument drawn out into a dull variety of logical deductions, together with a thousand other impertinencies of the same tasteless stamp, which you may find laid down among the precepts of those driest of all writers, Hermagoras and Apollodorus, were then held in supreme honour. And, to complete all, if the orator had just dipped into philosophy, and could sprinkle the harangue with some of the most trite maxims of that science, they thundered out his applauses to the skies. For these were new and uncommon topics to them; as, indeed, very few of the orators them-

selves had the least acquaintance with the writings either of the philosophers or the rhetoricians. But in our more enlightened age, where even the lowest part of an audience have, at least, some general notion of literature, Eloquence is constrained to find out new and more florid paths. She is obliged to avoid every thing that may fatigue or offend the ears of her audience; especially as she must now appear before judges, who decide, not by law, but by authority; who prescribe what limits they think proper to the orator's speech: nor calmly wait till he is pleased to come to the point, but call upon him to return, and openly testify their impatience whenever he seems disposed to wander from the question. Who, I beseech you, would, in our days, endure an orator, who should open his harangue with a tedious apology for the weakness of his constitution? Yet, almost every oration of Corvinus sets out in that manner. Would any man now have patience to hear out the five long books against Verres? or those endless volumes of pleading in favour of Tully, or Cæcina? The vivacity of our modern judges even prevents the speaker; and they are apt to conceive some sort of prejudice against all he utters, unless he has the address to bribe their attention by the strength and spirit of his arguments, the liveliness of his sentiments, or the elegance and brilliancy of his descriptions. The very populace have some notion of the beauty of language, and would no more relish the uncouthness of antiquity in a modern orator, than they would the gesture of old Roscius or Ambivius in a modern actor. Our young students, too, who are

forming themselves to eloquence, and for that purpose attend the courts of judicature, expect not merely to hear, but to carry home something worthy of remembrance : and it is usual with them, not only to canvass among themselves, but to transmit to their respective provinces, whatever ingenious thought or poetical ornament the orator has happily employed. For even the embellishments of poetry are now required : and those too, not copied from the heavy and antiquated manner of Attius or Pacuvius, but formed in the lively and elegant spirit of Horace, Virgil, and Lucan. Agreeably, therefore, to the superior taste and judgment of the present age, our orators appear with a more polished and graceful aspect. And, most certainly, it cannot be thought that their speeches are the less efficacious, because they soothe the ears of the audience with the pleasing modulation of harmonious periods. Has Eloquence lost her power, because she has improved her charms? Are our temples less durable than those of old, because they are not formed of rude materials, but shine out in all the polish and splendour of the most costly ornaments?

“To confess the plain truth, the effect which many of the ancients have upon me, is to dispose me either to laugh or sleep. Not to mention the more ordinary race of orators, such as Canutius, Arrius, or Furnius, with some others of the same dry and unaffecting cast; even Calvus himself scarce pleases me in more than one or two short orations : though he has left behind him, if I mistake not, no less than one and twenty volumes. And

the world in general seems to join with me in the same opinion of them : for how few are the readers of his invective against Asinius or Drusus ! Whereas, those against Vatinius are in every body's hands, particularly the second, which is, indeed, both in sentiment and language, a well-written piece. It is evident, therefore, that he had an idea of just composition, and rather wanted genius than inclination, to reach a more graceful and elevated manner. As to the orations of Cœlius, though they are by no means valuable upon the whole, yet they have their merit, so far as they approach to the exalted elegance of the present times. Whenever, indeed, his composition is careless and unconnected, his expression low, and his sentiments gross, it is then he is truly an ancient ; and I will venture to affirm, there is no one so fond of antiquity as to admire him in that part of his character. We may allow Cæsar, on account of the great affairs in which he was engaged, as we may Brutus, in consideration of his philosophy, to be less eloquent than might otherwise be expected of such superior geniuses. The truth is, even their warmest admirers acknowledge, that, as orators, they by no means shine with the same lustre which distinguished every other part of their reputation. Cæsar's speech, in favour of Decius, and that of Brutus, in behalf of king Deiotarus, with some others of the same coldness and langour, have scarcely, I imagine, met with any readers ; unless, perhaps, among such who can relish their verses. For verses, we know, they writ, (and published too,) I will not say with more spirit, but undoubtedly with more success,

than Cicero, because they had the good fortune to fall into much fewer hands. Asinius, one would guess, by his air and manner, to have been contemporary with Menenius and Appius; though, in fact, he lived much nearer to our times. It is visible he was a close imitator of Attius and Pacuvius, not only in his tragedies, but also in his orations; so remarkably dry and unpolished are all his compositions! But the beauty of eloquence, like that of the human form, consists in the smoothness, strength, and colour of its several parts. Corvinus I am inclined to spare, though it was his own fault that he did not equal the elegant refinements of modern compositions, as it must be acknowledged, his genius was abundantly sufficient for that purpose.

“The next I shall take notice of is Cicero; who had the same contest with those of his own times, as mine, my friends, with you. They, it seems, were favourers of the ancients, whilst he preferred the eloquence of his contemporaries; and, in truth, he excels the orators of his own age in nothing more remarkably, than in the solidity of his judgment. He was the first who set a polish upon oratory; who seemed to have any notion of delicacy of expression, and the art of composition. Accordingly, he attempted a more florid style; as he now and then breaks out into some lively flashes of wit; particularly in his later performances, when much practice and experience (those best and surest guides) had taught him a more improved manner. But his earlier compositions are not without the blemishes of antiquity. He is tedious

in his exordiums, too circumstantial in his narrations, and careless in retrenching luxuriances. He seems not easily affected, and is but rarely fired; as his periods are seldom either properly rounded, or happily pointed; he has nothing, in fine, you would wish to make your own. His speeches, like a rude edifice, have strength, indeed, and permanency; but are destitute of that elegance and splendour, which are necessary to render them perfectly agreeable. The orator, however, in his compositions, as the man of wealth in his buildings, should consider ornament as well as use; his structure should be, not only substantial but striking; and his furniture not merely convenient, but rich, and such as will bear a close and frequent inspection: whilst every thing that has a mean and awkward appearance ought to be totally banished.—Let our orator, then, reject every expression that is obsolete, and grown rusty, as it were, by age: let him be careful not to weaken the force of his sentiments by a heavy and inartificial combination of words, like our dull compilers of annals: let him avoid all low and insipid raillery; in a word, let him vary the structure of his periods, nor end every sentence with the same uniform close.

“ I will not expose the meanness of Cicero's conceits, nor his affectation of concluding almost every other period with, *as it should seem*, instead of pointing them with some lively and spirited turn. I mention even these with reluctance, and pass over many others of the same injudicious cast. It is singly, however, in little affectations of this kind, that they who are pleased to style themselves an-

cient orators seem to admire and imitate him. I shall content myself with describing their characters, without mentioning their names; but, you are sensible, there are certain pretenders to taste, who prefer Lucilius to Horace, and Lucretius to Virgil; who hold the eloquence of your favourite Bassus or Nonianus in the utmost contempt, when compared with that of Sisenna or Varro: in a word, who despise the productions of our modern rhetoricians, yet are in raptures with those of Calvus. These curious orators prate in the courts of judicature after the manner of the ancients, (as they call it) till they are deserted by the whole audience, and are scarce supportable even to their very clients. The truth of it is, that soundness of eloquence, which they so much boast, is but an evidence of the natural weakness of their genius, as it is the effect alone of tame and cautious art. No physician would pronounce a man to enjoy a proper constitution, whose health proceeded entirely from a studied and abstemious regimen. To be only not indisposed, is but a small acquisition; it is spirits, vivacity, and vigour that I require: whatever comes short of this, is but one remove from imbecility.

“Be it then (as with great ease it may, and, in fact, is) the glorious distinction of you, my illustrious friends, to ennoble our age with the most refined eloquence. It is with infinite satisfaction, Messalla, I observe, that you single out the most florid among the ancients for your model. And you, my other two ingenious friends,* so happily unite

* Maternus and Secundus.

strength of sentiment with beauty of expression ; such a pregnancy of imagination, such a symmetry of ordonnance, distinguish your speeches ; so copious or so concise in your elocution, as different occasions require ; such an inimitable gracefulness of style, and such an easy flow of wit, adorn and dignify your compositions : in a word, so absolutely you command the passions of your audience, and so happily temper your own ; that, however the envy and malignity of the present age may withhold that applause which is so justly your due, posterity, you may rely upon it, will speak of you in the advantageous terms which you well deserve."

When Aper had thus finished : " It must be owned," said Maternus, " our friend has spoken with much force and spirit. What a torrent of learning and eloquence has he poured forth in defence of the moderns ; and how completely vanquished the ancients with those very weapons which he borrowed from them ! However," continued he, applying himself to Messalla, " you must not recede from your engagement. Not that we expect you should enter into a defence of the ancients, or suppose (however Aper is pleased to compliment) that any of us can stand in competition with them. Aper, himself, does not sincerely think so, I dare say ; but takes the opposite side in the debate, merely in imitation of the celebrated manner of antiquity. We do not desire you, therefore, to entertain us with a panegyric upon the ancients : their well-established reputation places them far above the want of our encomiums. But what we request of you is, to account for our having so widely departed

from that noble species of eloquence which they displayed: especially since we are not, according to Aper's calculation, more than a hundred and twenty years distant from Cicero."

"I shall endeavour," returned Messalla, "to pursue the plan you have laid down to me.—I shall not enter into the question with Aper, (though, indeed he is the first that ever made it one) whether those who flourished above a century before us, can properly be styled ancients. I am not disposed to contend about words; let them be called ancients, or ancestors, or whatever other name he pleases, so it be allowed their oratory was superior to ours. I admit too, what he just now advanced, that there are various kinds of eloquence discernible in the same period; much more in different ages. But, as among the Attic orators, Demosthenes is placed in the first rank, then Æschines, Hyperides next, and, after him, Lysias and Lycurgus; an æra, which, on all hands, is agreed to have been the prime season of oratory: so amongst us, Cicero is, by universal consent, preferred to all his contemporaries; as, after him, Calvus, Asinius, Cæsar, Cœlius, and Brutus, are justly acknowledged to have excelled all our preceding or subsequent orators. Nor is it of any importance to the present argument, that they differ in manner, since they agree in kind. The compositions of Calvus, it is confessed, are distinguished by their remarkable conciseness, as those of Asinius are by the harmonious flow of his language. Brilliancy of sentiment is Cæsar's characteristic; as poignancy of wit is that of Cœlius. Solidity recommends the speeches of Brutus; while

copiousness, strength, and vehemence, are the predominant qualities in Cicero. Each of them, however, displays an equal soundness of eloquence; and one may easily discover a general resemblance and kindred likeness run through their several works, though diversified, indeed, according to their respective geniuses. That they mutually detracted from each other, (as it must be owned there are some remaining traces of malignity in their letters) is not to be imputed to them as orators, but as men. Calvus, Asinius, and even Cicero himself, were liable, no doubt, to be infected with jealousy, as well as with other human frailties and imperfections. Brutus, however, I will singly except from all imputations of malignity, as I am persuaded he spoke the sincere and impartial sentiments of his heart: for can it be supposed that he should envy Cicero, who does not seem to have envied even Cæsar himself? As to Galba, Lælius, and some others of the ancients, whom Aper has thought proper to condemn; I am willing to admit that they have some defects, which must be ascribed to a growing and yet immature eloquence.

“After all, if we must relinquish the nobler kind of oratory, and adopt some lower species, I should certainly prefer the impetuosity of Gracchus, or the incorrectness of Crassus, to the studied foppery of Mæcenas, or the childish jingle of Gallio: so much rather would I see eloquence clothed in the most rude and negligent garb, than decked out with the false colours of affected ornament! There is something in our present manner of elocution, which is so far from being oratorical, that it is not even

manly; and one would imagine our modern pleaders, by the levity of their wit, the affected smoothness of their periods, and licentiousness of their style, had a view to the stage in all their compositions. Accordingly, some of them are not ashamed to boast (which one can scarce even mention without a blush) that their speeches are adapted to the soft modulation of stage-music. It is this depravity of taste which has given rise to the very indecent and preposterous, though very frequent expression, that such an orator speaks *smoothly*, and such a dancer moves *eloquently*. I am willing to admit, therefore, that Cassius Severus, (the single modern whom Aper has thought proper to name) when compared to these his degenerate successors, may justly be deemed an orator; though, it is certain, in the greater part of his compositions, there appears far more strength than spirit. He was the first who neglected chastity of style, and propriety of method. Inexpert in the use of those very weapons with which he engages, he ever lays himself open to a thrust, by always endeavouring to attack; and one may much more properly say of him, that he pushes at random, than that he comports himself according to the just rules of regular combat. Nevertheless, he is greatly superior, as I observed before, in the variety of his learning, the agreeableness of his wit, and the strength of his genius, to those who succeeded him: not one of whom, however, has Aper ventured to bring into the field. I imagined, that after having deposed Asinius, and Cœlius, and Calvus, he would have substituted another set of orators in their place, and that he had

numbers to produce in opposition to Cicero, to Cæsar, and the rest whom he rejected ; or, at least, one rival to each of them. On the contrary, he has distinctly and separately censured all the ancients, while he has ventured to commend the moderns in general only. He thought, perhaps, if he singled out some, he should draw upon himself the resentment of all the rest : for every declaimer among them modestly ranks himself, in his own fond opinion, before Cicero, though, indeed, after Gabinianus. But what Aper was not hardy enough to undertake, I will be bold to execute for him ; and draw out his oratorical heroes in full view, that it may appear by what degrees the spirit and vigour of ancient eloquence was impaired and broken."

"Let me rather entreat you," said Maternus, interrupting him, "to enter, without any farther preface, upon the difficulty you first undertook to clear. That we are inferior to the ancients, in point of eloquence, I by no means want to have proved, being entirely of that opinion ; but my present inquiry is how to account for our sinking so far below them : a question, it seems, you have examined, and which I am persuaded you would discuss with much calmness, if Aper's unmerciful attack upon your favourite orators had not a little discomposed you." "I am nothing offended," returned Messalla, "with the sentiments which Aper has advanced ; neither ought you, my friends : remembering always that it is an established law in debates of this kind, that every man may, with entire security, disclose his unreserved opinion." "Proceed then, I beseech you," replied Maternus,

“to the examination of this point concerning the ancients, with a freedom equal to theirs: from which I suspect, alas! we have more widely degenerated, than even from their eloquence.”

“The cause,” said Messalla, resuming his discourse, “does not lie very remote: and, though you are pleased to call upon me to assign it, is well known, I doubt not, both to you and to the rest of this company. For is it not obvious that eloquence, together with the rest of the politer arts, has fallen from her ancient glory, not for want of admirers, but through the dissoluteness of our youth, the negligence of parents, the ignorance of preceptors, and the universal disregard of ancient manners? evils which derived their source from Rome, and thence spread themselves through Italy, and over all the provinces; though the mischief, indeed, is most observable within our own walls. I shall take notice, therefore, of those vices to which the youth of this city are more peculiarly exposed; which rise upon them in number as they increase in years. But before I enter farther into this subject, let me premise an observation or two concerning the judicious method of discipline practised by our ancestors, in training up their children.

“In the first place, then, the virtuous matrons of those wiser ages did not abandon their infants to the mean hovels of mercenary nurses, but tenderly reared them up at their own breasts; esteeming the careful regulation of their children, and domestic concerns, as the highest point of female merit. It was customary with them, likewise, to

choose out some elderly female relation, of approved conduct, with whom the family in general entrusted the care of their respective children, during their infant years. This venerable person strictly regulated, not only their more serious pursuits, but even their very amusements; restraining them, by her respected presence, from saying or acting any thing contrary to decency and good manners. In this manner, we are informed, Cornelia, the mother of the two Gracchi, as also Aurelia and Attia, to whom Julius and Augustus Cæsar owed their respective births, undertook this office of family education, and trained up those several noble youths to whom they were related. This method of discipline was attended with one very singular advantage; the minds of young men were conducted sound and untainted to the study of the noble arts. Accordingly, whatever profession they determined upon, whether that of arms, eloquence, or law, they entirely devoted themselves to that single pursuit, and, with undissipated application, possessed the whole compass of their chosen science.

“ But, in the present age, the little boy is delegated to the care of some paltry Greek chambermaid, in conjunction with two or three other servants, (and even those generally of the worst kind) who are absolutely unfit for every rational and serious office. From the idle tales and gross absurdities of these worthless people, the tender and uninstructed mind is suffered to receive its earliest impressions. It cannot, indeed, be supposed, that any caution should be observed among the domes-

ties, since the parents themselves are so far from training their young families to virtue and modesty, that they set them the first examples of luxury and licentiousness. Thus our youth gradually acquire a confirmed habit of impudence, and a total disregard of that reverence they owe both to themselves and to others. To say truth, it seems as if a fondness for horses, actors, and gladiators, the peculiar and distinguishing folly of this our city, was impressed upon them even in the womb: and when once a passion of this contemptible sort has seized and engaged the mind, what opening is there left for the noble arts?

“ All conversation in general is infected with topics of this kind; as they are the constant subjects of discourse, not only amongst our youth, in their academies, but even of their tutors themselves. For it is not by establishing a strict discipline, or by giving proofs of their genius, that this order of men gain pupils: it is by the meanest compliances and most servile flattery. Not to mention how ill-instructed our youth are in the very elements of literature, sufficient pains are by no means taken in bringing them acquainted with the best authors, or in giving them a proper notion of history, together with a knowledge of men and things. The whole that seems to be considered in their education, is to find out a person for them called a rhetorician. I shall take occasion, immediately, to give you some account of the rise and progress of this profession in Rome, and show you with what contempt it was received by our ancestors. But it will be necessary to lay before you a previous view

of that scheme of discipline which the ancient orators practised; of whose amazing industry, and unwearied application to every branch of the polite arts, we meet with many remarkable accounts in their own writings.

“ I need not inform you, that Cicero, in the latter end of his treatise intituled ‘ Brutus,’ (the former part of which is employed in commemorating the ancient orators) gives a sketch of the several progressive steps by which he formed his eloquence. He there acquaints us, that he studied the civil law under Q. Mucius; that he was instructed in the several branches of philosophy by Philo the Academic, and Diodorus the Stoic; that, not satisfied with attending the lectures of those eminent masters, of which there were, at that time, great numbers in Rome, he made a voyage into Greece and Asia, in order to enlarge his knowledge, and embrace the whole circle of sciences. Accordingly, he appears, by his writings, to have been master of logic, ethics, astronomy, and natural philosophy, besides being well versed in geometry, music, grammar, and, in short, in every one of the fine arts. For thus it is, my worthy friends, from deep learning and the united confluence of the arts and sciences, the resistless torrent of that amazing eloquence derived its strength and rapidity.

“ The faculties of the orator are not exercised, indeed, as in other sciences, within certain precise and determinate limits: on the contrary, eloquence is the most comprehensive of the whole circle of arts. Thus he alone can justly be deemed an orator, who knows how to employ the most persuasive ar-

guments upon every question, who can express himself suitably to the dignity of his subject with all the powers of grace and harmony; in a word, who can penetrate into every minute circumstance, and manage the whole train of incidents to the greatest advantage of his cause. Such, at least, was the high idea which the ancients formed of this illustrious character. In order, however, to attain this eminent qualification, they did not think it necessary to declaim in the schools, and idly waste their breath upon feigned or frivolous controversies. It was their wiser method to apply themselves to the study of such useful arts as concern life and manners, as treat of moral good and evil, of justice and injustice, of the decent and the unbecoming in actions. And, indeed, it is upon points of this nature that the business of the orator principally turns. For example, in the judiciary kind, it relates to matters of equity; as in the deliberate it is employed in determining the fit and the expedient: still, however, these two branches are not so absolutely distinct, but that they are frequently blended with each other. Now it is impossible, when questions of this kind fall under the consideration of an orator, to enlarge upon them in all the elegant and enlivening spirit of an efficacious eloquence, unless he is perfectly well acquainted with human nature; unless he understands the power and extent of moral duties, and can distinguish those actions which do not partake either of vice or virtue.

“ From the same source, likewise, he must derive his influence over the passions. For if he is

skilled, for instance, in the nature of indignation, he will be so much the more capable of soothing or inflaming the breasts of his judges : if he knows wherein compassion consists, and by what workings of the heart it is moved, he will the more easily raise that tender affection of the soul. An orator trained up in this discipline, and practised in these arts, will have full command over the breasts of his audience, in whatever disposition it may be his chance to find them ; and thus furnished with all the numberless powers of persuasion, will judiciously vary and accommodate his eloquence, as particular circumstances and conjunctures shall require. There are some, we find, who are most struck with that manner of elocution, where the arguments are drawn up in a short and close style : upon such an occasion, the orator will experience the great advantage of being conversant in logic. Others, on the contrary, admire flowing and diffusive periods, where the illustrations are borrowed from the ordinary and familiar images of common observation : here the Peripatetic writers will give him some assistance ; as, indeed, they will, in general, supply him with many useful hints in all the different methods of popular address. The Academies will inspire him with a becoming warmth ; Plato with sublimity of sentiments ; and Xenophon with an easy and elegant diction. Even the exclamatory manner of Epicurus, or Metrodorus, may be found, in some circumstances, not altogether unserviceable. In a word, what the Stoics pretend of their wise men, ought to be verified in our orator, and he should actually possess all human know-

ledge. Accordingly, the ancients who applied themselves to eloquence, not only studied the civil law, but also grammar, poetry, music, and geometry. Indeed, there are few causes (perhaps I might justly say there are none) wherein a skill in the first is not absolutely necessary; as there are many in which an acquaintance with the last-mentioned sciences is highly requisite.

“ If it should be objected, that ‘ eloquence is the single science requisite for the orator: as an occasional recourse to the others will be sufficient for all his purposes;’ I answer, in the first place, there will always be a remarkable difference in the manner of applying what we take up, as it were, upon loan, and what we properly possess; so that it will ever be manifest whether the orator is indebted to others for what he produces, or derives it from his own unborrowed fund; and in the next, the sciences throw an inexpressible grace over our compositions, even where they are not immediately concerned; as their effects are discernible where we least expect to find them. This powerful charm is not only distinguished by the learned and the judicious, but strikes even the most common and popular class of auditors; insomuch that one may frequently hear them applauding a speaker of this improved kind, as a man of genuine erudition; as enriched with the whole treasures of eloquence; and, in one word, acknowledge the complete orator. But I will take the liberty to affirm, that no man ever did, nor, indeed, ever can, maintain that exalted character, unless he enters the forum supported by the full strength of the united arts. Ac-

complishments, however, of this sort, are now so totally neglected, that the pleadings of our orators are debased by the lowest expressions; as a general ignorance both of the laws of our country and the acts of the senate is visible throughout their performances. All knowledge of the rights and customs of Rome is professedly ridiculed, and philosophy seems at present to be considered as something that ought to be shunned and dreaded. Thus Eloquence, like a dethroned potentate, is banished her rightful dominions, and confined to barren points and low conceits: and she, who was once mistress of the whole circle of sciences, and charmed every beholder with the goodly appearance of her glorious train, is now stripped of all her attendants, (I had almost said of all her genius) and seems as one of the meanest of the mechanic arts. This, therefore, I consider as the first and the principal reason of our having so greatly declined from the spirit of the ancients.

“ If I were called upon to support my opinion by authorities, might I not justly name, among the Grecians, Demosthenes; who, we are informed, constantly attended the lectures of Plato? as, among our own countrymen, Cicero himself assures us, (and in these very words, if I rightly remember) that he owed whatever advances he had made in eloquence, not to the rhetoricians, but to the Academic philosophers.

“ Other, and very considerable reasons might be produced for the decay of eloquence. But I leave them, my friends, as it is proper I should, to be mentioned by you; having performed my share in

the examination of this question : and with a freedom, which will give, I imagine, as usual, much offence. I am sure, at least, if certain of our contemporaries were to be informed of what I have here maintained, I should be told, that in laying it down as a maxim, that a knowledge both of law and philosophy are essential qualifications in an orator, I have been fondly pursuing a phantom of my own imagination."

"I am so far from thinking," replied Maternus, "you have completed the part you undertook, that I should rather imagine you had only given us the first general sketch of your design. You have marked out to us, indeed, those sciences wherein the ancient orators were instructed, and have placed in strong contrast their successful industry with our unperforming ignorance. But something farther still remains; and, as you have shown us the superior acquirements of the orators in those more improved ages of eloquence, as well as the remarkable deficiency of those in our own times, I should be glad you would proceed to acquaint us with the particular exercises by which the youth of those earlier days were wont to strengthen and improve their geniuses. For I dare say you will not deny that oratory is acquired by practice far better than by precept : and our other two friends here seem willing, I perceive, to admit it."

To which, when Aper and Secundus had signified their assent, Messalla, resuming his discourse, continued as follows :

"Having, then, as it should seem, disclosed to your satisfaction the seeds and first principles of

ancient eloquence, by specifying the several kinds of arts to which the ancient orators were trained, I shall now lay before you the method they pursued, in order to gain a facility in the exertion of eloquence. This, indeed, I have, in some measure, anticipated, by mentioning the preparatory arts to which they applied themselves: for it is impossible to make any progress in a compass so various and so abstruse, unless we not only strengthen our knowledge by reflection, but improve a general aptitude by frequent exercise. Thus it appears that the same steps must be pursued in exerting our oratory, as in attaining it. But if this truth should not be universally admitted; if any should think that eloquence may be possessed without paying previous court to her attendant sciences; most certainly, at least, it will not be denied, that a mind duly impregnated with the polite arts, will enter with so much the more advantage upon those exercises peculiar to the oratorical circus.

“Accordingly, our ancestors, when they designed a young man for the profession of eloquence, having previously taken due care of his domestic education, and seasoned his mind with useful knowledge, introduced him to the most eminent orator in Rome. From that time, the youth commenced his constant follower, attending him upon all occasions, whether he appeared in the public assemblies of the people, or in the courts of civil judicature. Thus he learned, if I may use the expression, the arts of oratorical conflict in the very field of battle. The advantages which flowed from this method were considerable: it animated the courage and

quickened the judgment of youth, thus to receive their instructions in the eye of the world, and in the midst of affairs, when no man could advance an absurd or a weak argument, without being rejected by the bench, exposed by his adversary, and, in a word, despised by the whole audience. By this method they imbibed the pure and uncorrupted streams of genuine eloquence. But though they chiefly attached themselves to one particular orator, they heard, likewise, all the rest of their contemporary pleaders, in many of their respective debates. Hence, also, they had an opportunity of acquainting themselves with the various sentiments of the people, and of observing what pleased or disgusted them most in the several orators of the forum. By this means they were supplied with an instructor of the best and most improving kind, exhibiting, not the feigned semblance of eloquence, but her real and lively manifestation: not a pretended, but a genuine adversary, armed in earnest for the combat; an audience, ever full and ever new, composed of foes as well as friends, and where not a single expression could fall uncensured or unapplauded. For you will agree with me, I am well persuaded, when I assert, that a solid and lasting reputation of eloquence must be acquired by the censure of our enemies, as well as by the applause of our friends; or rather, indeed, it is from the former that it derives its surest and most unquestioned strength and firmness. Accordingly, a youth thus formed to the bar, a frequent and attentive hearer of the most illustrious orators and debates, instructed by the experience of others, acquainted

with the popular state, and daily conversant in the laws of his country, to whom the solemn presence of the judges, and the awful eyes of a full audience were familiar, rose at once into affairs, and was equal to every cause. Hence it was that Crassus at the age of nineteen, Cæsar at twenty-one, Pollio at twenty-two, and Calvus when he was but a few years older, pronounced those several speeches against Carbo, Dolabella, Cato, and Vatinus, which we read to this hour with admiration.

“ On the other hand, our modern youth receive their education under certain declaimers, called rhetoricians; a set of men who made their first appearance in Rome a little before the time of Cicero. And that they were by no means approved by our ancestors, plainly appears from their being enjoined, under the censorship of Crassus and Domitius, to shut up their schools of *impudence*, as Cicero expresses it. But I was going to say, we are sent to certain academies, where it is hard to determine whether the place, the company, or the method of instruction is most likely to infect the minds of young people, and produce a wrong turn of thought. For nothing, certainly, can there be of an affecting solemnity in an audience, where all who compose it are of the same low degree of understanding; nor any advantage to be received from their fellow-students, where a parcel of boys and raw youths of unripe judgments, harangue before each other, without the least fear or danger of criticism: and as for their exercises, they are ridiculous in their very nature. They consist of two

kinds, and are either declamatory or controversial. The first, as being easier and requiring less skill, is assigned to the younger lads: the other is the task of more mature years. But, good gods! with what incredible absurdity are they composed! The truth is, the style of their declamations is as false and contemptible, as the subjects are useless and fictitious. Thus, being taught to harangue, in a most pompous diction, on the rewards due to tyrannicides, on the election to be made by deflowered virgins,* on the licentiousness of married women, on the ceremonies to be observed in times of pestilence, with other topics of the same unconcerning kind, which are daily debated in the schools, and scarce ever at the bar; 'they appear absolute novices in the affairs of the world, and are by much too elevated for common life.' "

† Here Messalla paused: when Secundus, ta-

* It was one of the questions usually debated in these rhetoric schools, whether the party who had been ravished should choose to marry the violator of her chastity, or rather have him put to death.

† The latter part of Messalla's discourse, together with what immediately followed it in the original, is lost. The chasm, however, does not seem to be so great as some of the commentators suspect. The translator, therefore, has ventured to fill it up in his own way, with those lines which are distinguished by inverted commas. He has, likewise, given the next subsequent part of the conversation to Secundus; though it does not appear in the original to whom it belongs. It would be of no great importance to the English reader to justify this last article: though, perhaps, it would not be very difficult, if it were necessary.

To save the reader the trouble of turning to a second note upon a like occasion, it is proper to observe in this

‘ king his turn in the conversation, began with observing, that’ the true and lofty spirit of genuine eloquence, like that of a clear and vigorous flame, is nourished by proper fuel, excited by agitation, and still brightens as it burns. “ It was in this manner,” said he, “ that the oratory of our ancestors was kindled and spread itself. The moderns have as much merit of this kind, perhaps, as can be acquired under a settled and peaceable government: but far inferior, no doubt, to that which shone out in the times of licentiousness and confusion, when he was deemed the ablest orator who had most influence over a restless and ungoverned multitude. To this situation of public affairs was owing those continual debates concerning the agrarian laws, and the popularity consequent thereupon; those long harangues of the magistrates, those impeachments of the great, those factions of the nobles, those hereditary enmities in particular families; and, in fine, those incessant struggles between the senate and the commons; which, though each of them prejudicial to the state, yet most certainly contributed to produce and encourage that rich vein of eloquence which discovered itself in those tempestuous days. The way to dignities lay directly through the paths of eloquence. The more a man signalized himself by his abilities in this art, so much the more easily he opened his road to preferment, and maintained an ascendant over his col-

place, that he will find the same inverted commas in page 149. The words included between them are also an addition of the translator’s; and for the same reason as that just now mentioned.

leagues, at the same time that it heightened his interest with the nobles, his authority with the senate, and his reputation with the people in general. The patronage of these admired orators was courted even by foreign nations; as the several magistrates of our own endeavoured to recommend themselves to their favour and protection, by showing them the highest marks of honour whenever they set out for the administration of their respective provinces, and by studiously cultivating a friendship with them at their return. They were called upon, without any solicitation on their own part, to fill up the supreme dignities of the state. Nor were they, even in a private station, without great power, as, by means of the persuasive arts, they had a very considerable influence over both the senate and the people. The truth is, it was an established maxim in those days, that, without the oratorical talents, no man could either acquire or maintain any high post in the government. And, no wonder, indeed, that such notions should universally prevail; since it was impossible for any person, endued with this commanding art, to pass his life in obscurity, how much soever it might be agreeable to his own inclinations; since it was not sufficient merely to vote in the senate, without supporting that vote with good sense and eloquence; since, in all public impeachments or civil causes, the accused was obliged to answer to the charge in his own person; since written depositions were not admitted in judicial matters, but the witnesses were called upon to deliver their evidence in open court. Thus our ancestors were eloquent, as much by necessity as by en-

couragements. To be possessed of the persuasive talents, was esteemed the highest glory; as the contrary character was held in the utmost contempt. In a word, they were incited to the pursuit of oratory, by a principle of honour, as well as by a view of interest. They dreaded the disgrace of being considered rather as clients than patrons; of losing those dependents which their ancestors had transmitted to them, and seeing them mix in the train of others; in short, of being looked upon as men of mean abilities, and consequently, either passed over in the disposal of high offices, or despised in the administration of them.

“ I know not whether those ancient historical pieces, which were lately collected and published by Mucianus, from the old libraries where they have hitherto been preserved, have yet fallen into your hands. This collection consists of eleven volumes of the public journals, and three of epistles; by which it appears that Pompey and Crassus gained as much advantage from their eloquence as their arms; that Lucullus, Metellus, Lentulus, Curio, and the rest of those distinguished chiefs, devoted themselves with great application to this insinuating art; in a word, that not a single person, in those times, rose to any considerable degree of power, without the assistance of the rhetorical talents.

“ To these considerations may be farther added, that the dignity and importance of the debates in which the ancients were engaged, contributed greatly to advance their eloquence. Most certain, indeed, it is, that an orator must necessarily find great difference with respect to his powers, when

he is to harangue only upon some trifling robbery, or a little paltry form of pleading; and when the faculties of his mind are warmed and enlivened by such interesting and animating topics as bribery at elections, as the oppression of our allies, or the massacre of our fellow-citizens. Evils these, which, beyond all peradventure, it were better should never happen; and we have reason to rejoice that we live under a government where we are strangers to such terrible calamities; still it must be acknowledged, that wherever they did happen, they were wonderful incentives to eloquence. For the orator's genius rises and expands itself in proportion to the dignity of the occasion upon which it is exerted; and I will lay it down as a maxim, that it is impossible to shine out in all the powerful lustre of genuine eloquence, without being inflamed by a suitable importance of subject. Thus the speech of Demosthenes against his guardians, scarcely, I imagine, established his character; as it was not the defence of Archias or Quinctius, that acquired Cicero the reputation of a consummate orator. It was Catiline, and Milo, and Verres, and Mark Antony, that warmed him with that noble glow of eloquence, which gave the finishing brightness to his unequalled fame. Far am I from insinuating, that such infamous characters deserve to be tolerated in a state, in order to supply convenient matter of oratory: all I contend for is, that this art flourishes to most advantage in turbulent times. Peace, no doubt, is infinitely preferable to war; but it is the latter only that forms the soldier. It is just the same with eloquence: the oftener she

enters, if I may so say, the field of battle, the more wounds she gives and receives ; the more powerful the adversary with which she contends, so much the more ennobled she appears in the eye of mankind. For it is the disposition of human nature always to admire what we see is attended with danger and difficulty in others, how much soever we may choose ease and security for ourselves.

“ Another advantage which the ancient orators had over the moderns, is, that they were not confined in their pleadings, as we are, to a few hours. On the contrary, they were at liberty to adjourn as often as they thought proper : they were unlimited as to the number of days or of counsel, and every orator might extend his speech to the length most agreeable to himself. Pompey, in his third consulship, was the first who curbed the spirit of eloquence : still, however, permitting all causes to be heard, agreeably to the laws, in the forum, and before the prætors. How much more considerable the business of those magistrates was, than that of the centumvirs, who, at present, determine all causes, is evident, from this circumstance ; that not a single oration of Cicero, Cæsar, or Brutus, or, in short, of any one celebrated orator, was spoken before these last, excepting only those of Pollio in favour of the heirs of Urbinia. But then it must be remembered, that these were delivered about the middle of the reign of Augustus, when a long and uninterrupted peace abroad, a perfect tranquillity at home, together with the general good conduct of that wise prince, had damped the flames of eloquence as well as those of sedition.

“ You will smile, perhaps, at what I am going to say, and I mention it for that purpose; but is there not something in the present confined garb of our orators, that has an ill effect even upon their elocution, and makes it appear low and contemptible? May we not suppose, likewise, that much of the spirit of oratory is sunk, by that close and despicable scene wherein many of our causes are now debated? For the orator, like a generous steed, requires a free and open space wherein to expatiate; otherwise, the force of his powers is broken, and half the energy of his talents is checked in their career. There is another circumstance also exceedingly prejudicial to the interest of eloquence, as it prevents a due attention to style: we are now obliged to enter upon our speech whenever the judge calls upon us; not to mention the frequent interruptions which arise by the examination of witnesses. Besides, the courts of judicature are, at present, so unfrequented, that the orator seems to stand alone, and talk to bare walls. But eloquence rejoices in the clamour of loud applause, and exults in a full audience, such as used to press round the ancient orators, when the forum stood thronged with nobles; when a numerous retinue of clients, when foreign ambassadors, and whole cities assisted at the debate; and when even Rome herself was concerned in the event. The very appearance of that prodigious concourse of people, which attended the trials of Bestia, Cornelius, Scaurus, Milo, and Vatinius, must have inflamed the breast of the coldest orator: accordingly, we find, that of all the ancient orations now extant, there are none which have more eminently

distinguished their authors, than those which were pronounced under such favourable circumstances. To these advantages we may farther add, likewise, the frequent general assemblies of the people, the privilege of arraigning the most considerable personages, and the popularity of such impeachments: when the sons of oratory spared not even Scipio, Sylla, or Pompey; and when, in consequence of such acceptable attacks upon suspected power, they were sure of being heard by the people with the utmost attention and regard. How must these united causes contribute to raise the genius, and inspire the eloquence of the ancients!"

‘ Maternus, who, you will remember, was in the
‘ midst of his harangue in favour of poetry, when
‘ Messalla first entered into the room, finding Se-
‘ cundus was now silent, took that opportunity of
‘ resuming his invective against the exercise of the
‘ oratorical arts in general.’ “ That species of
eloquence,” said he, “ wherein poetry is concerned,
is calm and peaceable, moderate and virtuous;
whereas, that other supreme kind which my two
friends here have been describing, is the offspring
of licentiousness (by fools miscalled liberty) and the
companion of sedition; bold, obstinate, and haugh-
ty, unknowing how to yield or how to obey, an
encourager of a lawless populace, and a stranger in
all well-regulated communities. Who ever heard of
an orator in Lacedæmon or Crete? cities which exer-
cised the severest discipline, and were governed by
the strictest laws. We have no account of Persian or
Macedonian eloquence, or, indeed, of that of any
other state which submitted to a regular admi-

nistration of government: whereas, Rhodes and Athens (places of popular rule, where all things lay open to all men) swarmed with orators innumerable. In the same manner, Rome, whilst she was under no settled policy; while she was torn with parties, dissensions, and factions; while there was no peace in the forum, no harmony in the senate, no moderation in the judges; while there was neither reverence paid to superiors, nor bounds prescribed to magistrates—Rome, under these circumstances, produced, beyond all dispute, a stronger and brighter vein of eloquence; as some valuable plants will flourish even in the wildest soil. But the tongue of the Gracchi did nothing compensate the republic for their seditious laws; nor the superior eloquence of Cicero make him any amends for his sad catastrophe.

“ The truth is, the forum (that single remain which now survives of ancient oratory) is, even in its present situation, an evident proof that all things amongst us are not conducted in that well-ordered manner one could wish. For, tell me, is it not the guilty or the miserable alone that fly to us for assistance? When any community implores our protection, is it not because it either is insulted by some neighbouring state, or torn by domestic feuds? And what province ever seeks our patronage, till she has been plundered or oppressed? But far better it surely is, never to have been injured, than, at last, to be redressed. If there was a government in the world free from commotions and disturbances, the profession of oratory would there be as useless as that of medicine to the

sound: and, as the physician would have little practice or profit among the healthy and the strong, so neither would the orator have much business or honour where obedience and good manners universally prevail. To what purpose are studied speeches in a senate, where the better and the major part of the assembly are already of one mind? What the expediency of haranguing the populace, where public affairs are not determined by the voice of an ignorant and giddy multitude, but by the steady wisdom of a single person? To what end voluntary informations, where crimes are unfrequent and inconsiderable? or of laboured and invidious defences, where the clemency of the judge is ever on the side of the accused? Believe me, then, my worthy (and, as far as the circumstances of the age require, my eloquent) friends, had the gods reversed the date of your existence, and placed you in the times of those ancients we so much admire, and them in yours, you would not have fallen short of that glorious spirit which distinguished their oratory, nor would they have been destitute of a proper temperature of moderation. But, since a high reputation for eloquence is not consistent with great repose in the public, let every age enjoy its own peculiar advantages, without derogating from those of a former."

Maternus having ended, Messalla observed, that there were some points which his friend had laid down, that were not perfectly agreeable to his sentiments; as there were others, which he wished to hear explained more at large: "but the time is now," said he, "too far advanced." "If I have

maintained any thing," replied Maternus, "which requires to be opened more explicitly, I shall be ready to clear it up in some future conference:" at the same time, rising from his seat and embracing Aper; "Messalla and I," continued he, smiling, "shall arraign you, be well assured, before the poets and admirers of the ancients." "And I, both of you," returned Aper, "before the rhetoricians." Thus we parted in mutual good-humour.

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THE END.

Melmoth, William, 1710-1799

Letters on several subjects

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